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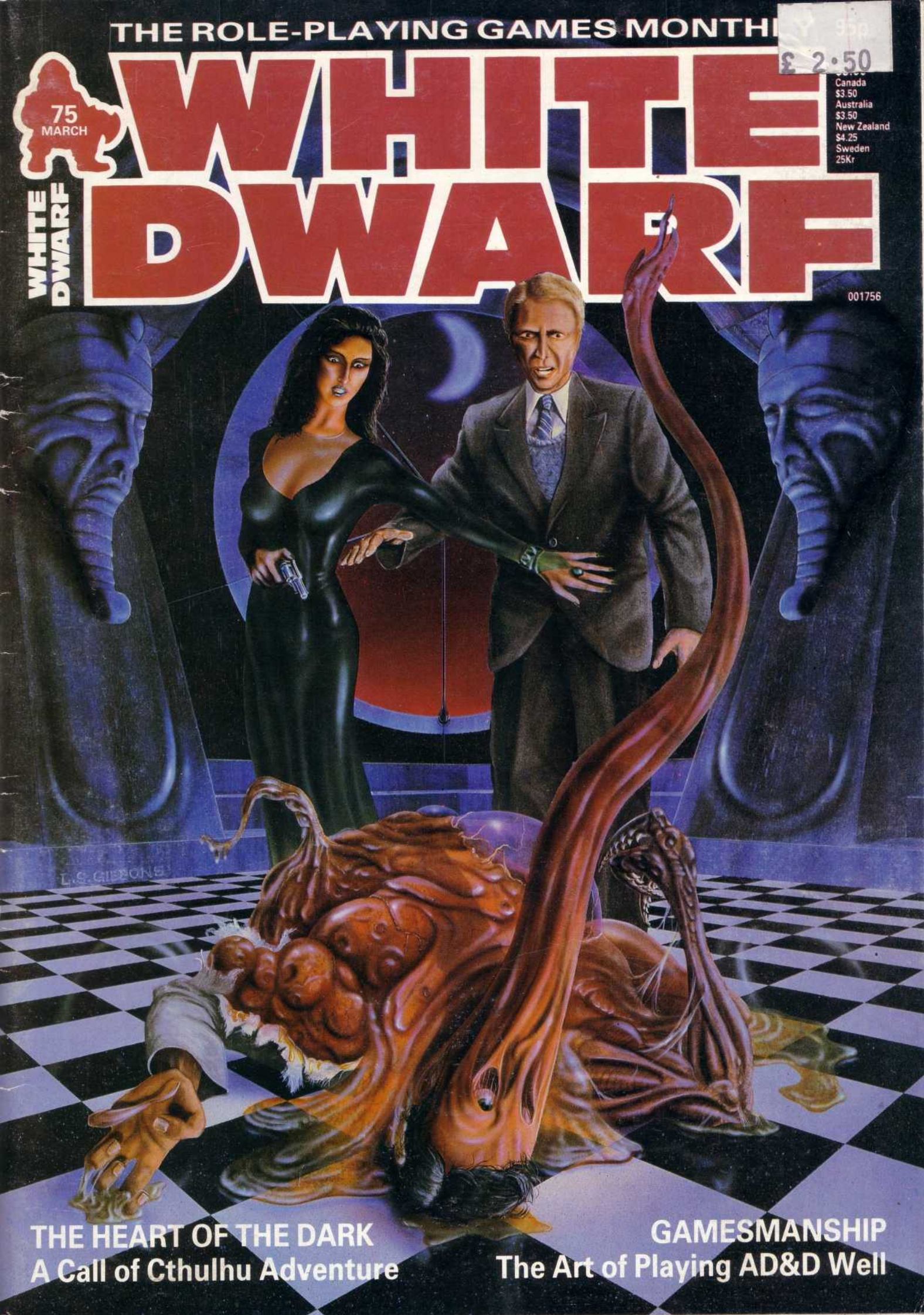

THE HEART OF THE DARK
A Call of Cthulhu Adventure

GAMESMANSHIP
The Art of Playing AD&D Well

WHITE DWARF

ISSUE 75 MARCH 1986

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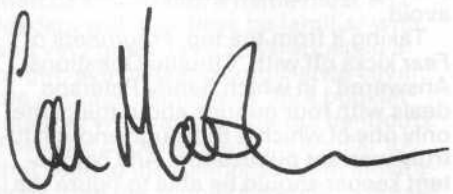
There is always an element of trepidation amongst readers and new editor alike when a magazine's familiar figurehead has gone. Will the content change drastically? What direction will the magazine take? What plans does the new editor have. . . ? Stay tuned to the next few issues and find out!

Meanwhile, readers who have been following the magazine for the last year or so should have noticed a shift away from the usual formulaic style, and indeed, the *White Dwarf* has been mutating slowly into a different beastie. This amorphous creature needs shaping into its final form, for which we need input from you, the readers. Once again that strange alien menace that is the readers' survey looms on the horizon. . . .

Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy this quite remarkable issue of the *Dwarf*. There are six features to stimulate your role-playing experiences. And why not? That, after all, is what we're here for.



FEATURES

RuneQuest Ruminations — *by Oliver Dickinson* — 11
Some thoughts about third edition *RuneQuest*

How to Save the Universe — *by Pete Tamlyn* — 13
Blue leotard? Gold tights? . . . Red face!

Gamesmanship — *by Martin Hytch* — 18
Getting more experience playing *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*

Mass Media — *by Andrew Smith* — 23
Communication breakdowns in *Traveller*

Nightmare in Green — *by Graeme Davis* — 24
Floricultural *AD&D* adventure

The Heart of the Dark — *by Andy Bradbury* — 32
Mystagogical *Call of Cthulhu* scenario

DEPARTMENTS

Open Box — 4
Reviews *Fragments of Fear, Cosmic Encounter* and other thrilling games

Critical Mass — *by Dave Langford* — 6
Tears apart the latest science fiction and fantasy books

2020 Vision — *by Colin Greenland* — 7
Pans current fantasy, horror and sf movies

Thrud the Barbarian — *by Carl Critchlow* — 10
Yet more hack work

The Travellers — *by Mark Harrison* — 22
Squiggly, squiggly, squiggly, proot!

Letters — *edited by Ian Marsh* — 30
Readers write and rant

Treasure Chest — 42
Character background in *AD&D*

Tabletop Heroes — *by Joe Dever* — 44
A well-oiled column

Gobbledigook — *by Bil* — 50
Trapped in a dungeon that was not his . . .

Trevor's Tidbits — *by Trevor Mendham* — 51
Titillating snippets about the rolegaming hobby

Small Ads — 53
Classified information

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In Open Box, *fantasy and science fiction games and supplements currently in the shops are reviewed by independent authorities.*

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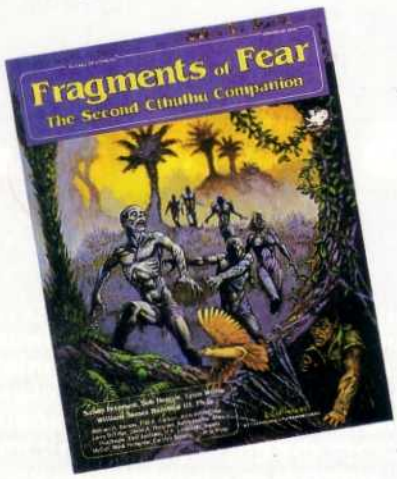


GOLDEN HEROES SUPERVISORS KIT
RPG Play-Aid
Games Workshop **£3.95**

Hmm, interesting product to review, this one. When you first see it on a shop shelf you will probably think something like: 'Hey, this is pretty thick, must be a good buy.' Having got it home and discovered that the thickness is almost entirely due to a pad of pre-printed forms you may well be somewhat annoyed.

So, is it a rip-off? Let's look at what you get for your money.

The cover, which features a reprint of the rather splendid Alan Craddock picture from the Supervisors Manual (but a reprint all the same), opens out to form a GM's shield. It contains all of the tables from the pull-out reference sheets supplied with the game. As they are reduced to three pages the type is somewhat smaller but at least you don't have to keep turning the page. I'll use it for that reason but I wouldn't have bought it.

The pad of forms contains character sheets, combat record sheets and campaign record sheets. These are all as illustrated in the game rulebooks and are nicely printed on good paper. However, you will run out of them fairly quickly, especially the combat record sheets. If the only means of getting more is going to be buying another *Supervisors Kit* this is a rip-off. Issue the pad separately, please *Workshop*.

The pack also contains file cards and cardboard characters for all of the supervillains listed in the Supervisors Manual. The file cards are very useful during play – indeed I've made my own for all the characters my players and I have invented. Having a pile of cards by you whilst you are running the game saves an awful lot of thumbing through records or writing out of quick reference sheets.

The real item of value in the pack, however, must be the cardboard figures. Okay, I know, I much prefer metal figures as well, but when you consider that they are about 60p each these days, and then you have to spend a lot of time painting them, cardboard is suddenly very attractive. You get 24 figures in the pack for less than a fifth of the cost of equivalent metal figures. And they are exactly the figures that you want. I would have liked to see the figures for the 'Crossfire' scenario provided in the rules as well, but this lot will do fine for the moment.

Complexity:	2	**Value:**	8
Ease of Use:	9	**Usefulness:**	9
Production:	8	**Overall:**	8

Pete Tamlyn

TERROR OF THE LICHEMASTER
Wargame Play-Aid
Games Workshop **£5.95**

Terror of the Lichemaster is the latest in the growing range of *Warhammer* support material. Like earlier supplements, it provides the tabletop gamer with a selection of card buildings together with a *Warhammer* scenario.

Box contents are nice and weighty, with 16 sheets of buildings as well as the scenario booklet. All the buildings are in full colour, and have been splendidly executed by David Andrews. They are colour-coded to make them easier to put together. A number of additional windows, doors, signs, proclamations, and wanted posters are also provided.

Once assembled the card models are reasonably sturdy, but they can be further strengthened by bracing with spare card, making them surprisingly rigid.

The scenario provides a short campaign in which the card buildings are used to represent one of three battle locations: a dwarf mine, a farmstead and a village. The campaign pits a necromancer (the lichemaster himself) and a host of recently-risen undead, against, successively, a group of dwarf miners, a family of farmers and, finally, the main settlement of the area. The campaign, although small in scale, poses some interesting problems for players.

There are some useful magic items, and some colourful characters in the *Warhammer* vein, including the lovesick Antonio Epstein, and the one-time intervalley wrestling champion Albi Schutz. Card counters are provided to represent the troops involved. Whilst card counters cannot really compare with metal models, they are adequate in themselves, allowing the game to be played more or less instantly, and at no additional expense. The counters are printed in colour on the cover, and whilst this is a laudable use of space, it does mean that you have to lose the cover should you decide to cut them out.

Terror of the Lichemaster is a solid product for *Warhammer* players. The finish is presentable, and, with a little intelligent modelling, can be brought up to a very high standard indeed.

Complexity:	6	**Value:**	9
Ease of Use:	6	**Usefulness:**	9
Production:	8	**Skill:**	7
Overall:	9		

Richard Vicary

FRAGMENTS OF FEAR
RPG Supplement
Chaosium **£5.95**

Chaosium's companion packs should be pretty familiar by now, and the company's intention to publish bits of lore too odd to fit in elsewhere is essentially an admirable one. The latest collection of oddities is the *Second Cthulhu Companion*, also known as *Fragments of Fear*, which unfortunately falls into most of the pits its predecessor managed to avoid.

Taking it from the top, *Fragments of Fear* kicks off with 'Cthulhu Questions Answered', in which Sandy Peterson deals with four queries about the game, only one of which is thorough enough to truly warrant publication. Any competent keeper should be able to figure the answers to the others out himself.

'Mythos Comparative SIZes' and the various silhouettes in the central foldout provide some indication of how large monsters are, and form a clever little piece once you consider that no version of the game thus far has included a SIZ table.

'On the Ubiquity of Cthulhu' continues the publication of the notes of Professor Phileus P Sadowsky, and is factually very unnerving.

'The Cthulhu Grimoire' reprints all of the spells published in the other seven *CoC* supplements, and is of great value to those who do not own the bulk of these. Otherwise, the only thing you really gain

is the convenience of having them together in one place.

'Lions and Tigers and Bears, etc' prints stats for various creatures, most of which have appeared in the Sourcebook; they are beefed up considerably in this list.

Following the creature stats is the scenario 'The Underground Menace', originally printed in *Different Worlds 19*, and essentially unchanged, beyond the more sophisticated phrasing of the piece. This is one of the better contributions to *Fragments of Fear*, as it can be used during a campaign, as an introductory scenario, or at a convention to demonstrate what the game is all about.

The almost obligatory stats for new gods and monsters occupy the next three pages, and then we enter the direst scenario for *Call of Cthulhu* that I have ever seen – 'Valley of the Four Shrines'. In this 'adventure' the characters penetrate the lush Belgian Congo in search of a lost city. It relies too much on combat for my tastes, basically detailing combat encounters the characters can have on the way to and inside the city. The whole basis of the scenario is too vague, and the author has apparently avoided the large task of detailing the city by putting it under a great lake.

Other inclusions are a map of Innsmouth, some ritual curses, a Lovecraft poem and an excerpt from a medical test of 1896 usable as a scenario idea.

Overall, *Fragments of Fear* disappoints me, especially as it follows in the wake of *Masks of Nyarlathotep*, the best *CoC* campaign to date. The biggest weakness is the 'Valley' scenario; surely *Chaosium* has better works than this on file? It lowers the whole tone of the supplement, and takes up so much space that the other items truly appear to be *Fragments*.

Production:	**8**	**Usefulness:**	**6**
Ease of Use:	**7**	**Value:**	**8**
Overall:	**7**		**Phil Frances**

JUDGEMENT DAY
Role-Playing Scenario
Games Workshop **£3.95**

The very first scenario for *Judge Dredd – The Role-Playing Game* is here at last. *Judgement Day* has been written by Marcus L Rowland, a name most *WD* readers will doubtless be familiar with, and very good it is too. Wrapped in a bright, eye-catching comic-style cover, the package comes as a thick booklet together with various pull-out handouts. The style of presentation is similar to that used in the rulebooks, with illustrations from the *Judge Dredd* strips breaking up the text. These work very well at setting the scene, and help to maintain the connection with the comic. More than an average amount of thought appears to have gone into the format of this scenario: major sections are called (very aptly) 'progs', and these are further subdivided into headings that are easily recognisable by a GM in a hurry. All the information that a GM may need at one time is given within a particular section.

Marcus's writing style, as you may know, is succinct and to the point, and as usual he manages to convey a large amount of information in relatively few words. Though a bit mind-numbing on initial reading, GMs will appreciate the attention to detail and lack of waffle when the adventure starts for real.

Judgement Day seems to me to be an ideal first scenario. Spanning space, and in some ways transcending time, the action takes place in both Mega-City One and on the prison moon Titan. The curious reason for Titan orbiting Jupiter instead of Saturn (up to now considered a simple mistake by the comic's writers) is explained by a somewhat dubious, if imaginative, excerpt from 'The Mega-City Encyclopaedia'. The settings for the various stages of the case are interesting, though perhaps tending towards the 'what's the next weird place we can throw in?' style of things. They will serve to introduce new Judges to the Mega-City, however, and anyway what's the point of setting everything out on the streets? As far as the plot goes, I'm afraid I can't really tell you anything without completely ruining the adventure. All I can reveal is that it concerns the return of one of the comic strip's most infamous villains!

The investigation proceeds in a rather linear fashion, with each prog needing to be resolved before the way forward to the next one becomes clear, though there are various routes within each prog. As each section of the case is contained within a chapter-like prog, this scenario would be ideal if a group only had a few hours to spare for each playing session. The style and feel of the actual case owes a lot to the 'onion skin' format of the better *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios. As a whole, the case works well, emphasising investigative skills over violence in most cases, though this being Mega-City One there is still plenty of the latter to go around.

A very nice touch, which again helps maintain the peculiar atmosphere of the *Judge Dredd* strips, is the humorous use of silly names, awful puns, and other jokey asides. Such groan-inducing humour is an integral part of the *Judge Dredd* strip, and accounts for much of its popularity, especially amongst older readers. It is gratifying to see this continued, both in the game, and now in the first scenario, and this style of things will, I hope, continue to play a major part in future releases.

Judgement Day is a solidly produced, value-for-money scenario, with well realised plot lines and individualised NPCs. Its plot is clever though slightly off-beat, but very much in keeping with the rest of Judge Dredd's world.

Complexity:	**9**	**Value:**	**8**
Ease of Use:	**8**	**Skill:**	**9**
Production:	**9**	**Overall:**	**9**
			Jason Kingsley

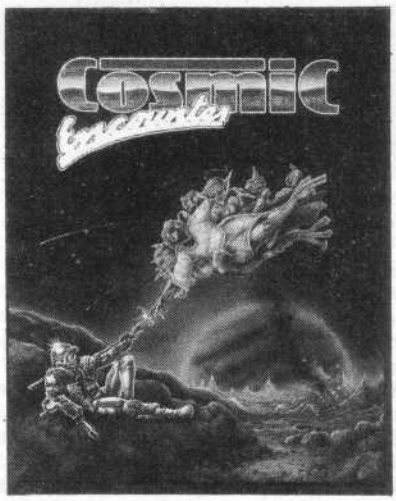
COSMIC ENCOUNTER
Boardgame
Games Workshop **£10.95**

Cosmic Encounter, the game of stellar conquest (as the blurb goes), is a game for two to six players, each of whom represents a particular alien race. The object is to secure five bases on other races' planets by using a combination of innate powers, military muscle and shrewd judgement.

The game's components have changed since its original inception: a new style jig-cut board being the main difference. Also included, besides the customary short rule-book, are 32 Power cards (Alien Races) with stands, 120 army tokens, a Destiny card pack, 64 Challenge cards, and the ever-ready Attack Funnel!

The rules themselves are fairly straightforward. Set up is rapid: each player is dealt seven Challenge cards and deploys four armies on each of his five home planets. It is now that each player adopts the power they will keep throughout the game. It is the interplay of these varied and bizarre philosophies that will shape tactics, and which gives the game its unique flavour.

Combat is fast, fun and usually fatal. The attacker places the funnel and commits his tokens to the fray. Both sides may call for allies and the outcome is decided by a simple headcount, plus a Challenge card. The side with the highest total wins, either gaining a base or breathing a sigh of relief at the outcome; the loser goes to the warp (a central no-go area).



Although it sounds deceptively simple, the outcome is heavily influenced by the alien powers involved. Some are straightforward; such as the Warrior, who counts each of his single tokens as strength 4; or the Virus, who doesn't add his Challenge card, but instead multiplies by it – very lethal indeed! Other aliens require a more careful approach, but no one power ever proves supreme: each may be balanced by another or by careful use of the many special challenges available. The cut-throat nature allows few chances to romp away with a quick win; planning, careful card selection and good timing are required.

Cosmic Encounter is an easy, light-hearted game with plenty of scope for devious strategy and backstabbing. Most games last between one and two hours, and given the variety of powers available, each game proves to be quite different. The earlier version of this game proved too scarce and expensive for it to become well-known: try it now, and see why it was worth re-releasing.

Complexity:	**5**	**Production:**	**8**
Playability:	**8**	**Value:**	**7**
Skill:	**7**	**Overall:**	**8**
			Tim Wilson

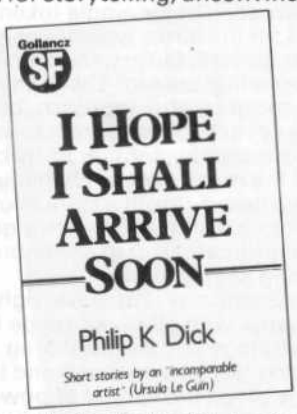
Critical Mass *is a regular fantasy and science fiction book review column, written by Dave Langford.*

PUBLISHERS' LORE

I'm writing at the dead time of the publishing year, between the Xmas Splurge and the Spring Launches. Folklore says this is a rotten period to put out a book. When authors are told, 'We've put you on the schedule for January,' they find it as cheering as when publishers say: 'Great news – we're remaindering your book at last!'

Gollancz's latest would seem doubly cursed, since they're books of short stories. 'I'm publishing so-and-so's new collection' is pronounced by the average editor as though he/she were saying, 'Blind Pew called this morning and handed me the Black Spot.' This isn't mere superstition: the mindless hordes (you) are notoriously reluctant to buy single-author collections. You might also be surprised to hear that hardback buyers are overwhelmingly keen on glossy dustjackets, which add substantially to the cost of the book. Attempts to publish cheaper, unjacketed books have failed miserably. . . .

Pohlstars (*Gollancz* 203pp £8.95) is Frederik Pohl's first SF collection for many years. The eleven stories are smoothly professional, ranging from minor jokes to a mini-novel. One shaggy joke assumes that evil aliens two centuries hence will be unaware of gravitational quirks which SF did to death in the 1960s – this got published in 1983! Other tales conceal effective rabbit-punches. The mini-novel is strong on SF speculation ('oaty-boats' sucking power from ocean temperature differentials), dodgy on 2020s corporate politics (gangster/mafiosi clichés drag it back to the 1920s), good for storytelling, unconvincing in its



final psychological twist. A mixed bag.

Likewise Philip K Dick's collection *I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon* (*Gollancz* 179pp £8.95): the ten stories straggle from 1954 to a posthumous 1985. Though he's less polished than Pohl, I like Dick better. Pohl writes as a wise guy who knows the rules, knows people are out to screw you, and knows you can't beat the system. Dick generally starts by changing the rules, continues to find 'goodness' in odd places (loonies, alien simulacra, computers), and often steps right outside the preconceived system. In his very funny 'The Exit Door Leads In', the System itself is training people not to blindly obey the System. . . . Dick's combined screwiness and humanity fill the opening essay, switching between jokes and his worrying theory that unread chunks of the Bible were creeping into his SF. 'The existence of Disneyland (which I *know* is real) proves that we are not living in Judaea in AD50.' Few people needed this particular reassurance. There may be no more Dick collections, so bag this one.

There will doubtless be hordes more 'Darkover' tales from Marion Zimmer Bradley: publishers love issuing books very similar to previous ones. *Hawkmistress* (*Arrow* 336pp £2.25), despite its veneer of science-fantasy, seems hauntingly familiar. Heroine Romilly wears breeches and gets on well with animals, but Daddy wants her to don girlish clothes and marry. One knows instantly that the chap whose advances Romilly finds most loathsome is Daddy's arranged bridegroom: and so it proves. With hawk and horse our heroine flees to find her own way in the world. . . . The SF factor seems superfluous: Romilly is psionically instead of ordinarily good with animals, and eventually helps extract someone rather unconvincingly from a besieged town by the psychic equivalent of walking on tiptoe. The feminist content suffers from the period setting: stuff like arranged marriages (no longer, I believe, a hot feminist issue) tends to distract from more subtle inequalities.

Overall, it's a readable yarn which is essentially historical romance – for SF fans who wouldn't be seen dead with your average bodice-ripper novel, but enjoy the camouflaged version.

'Science fantasy' is a useful publisher's phrase for Bradley's Darkover or McCaffrey's Pern: token spaceships and astronomy, plus lashings of Mystical Mental Powers. Freda Warrington's *A Blackbird in Silver* (*NEL* 302pp £2.95) is weirdly publicized under this label. Actually it's another sub-sub-Tolkien quest epic in which a tiny fellowship sets off to nobble Total Evil, here taking the form of a large and unfriendly Worm or Serpent. It's not that badly written – just awfully standard, overdone fantasy fare. Perhaps the 'science fantasy' label came from the author's tendency to describe magic in terms of imperfectly recollected physics. 'There was no 'sorcery' on the Earth, the potential energy for it did not exist.' 'The energy spins in a huge ever-increasing circle. . . .' The writing spins out a huge ever-increasing trilogy. Beam me up, Scotty.

With a title like *Sex Secrets of Ancient Atlantis* (*Illustrated*) you can hardly go wrong (*Granada* 220pp £1.95). Famous pseudonym John Grant has crafted another of his poignantly awful shaggy-dog narratives. The illustrations are sadly all quite printable; the text pokes fun at UFOlogy, the Atlantis myth, magic pendulums, *The Tao of Sex*, and worse. The sexual revelations are fully as astonishing as any that were published in *Imagine*. 'Ex-Government physicist Professor David Langford' is severely criticized for the vile orthodoxy of his views, and Grant complains 'I have had no reply at all to a letter which I wrote to Margaret Thatcher (who may well herself to be an Atlantean agent sent to destroy our country's economy).' Need I go on?

C J Cherryh goes on, and on, in *Forty Thousand in Gehenna* (*Methuen* 445pp £2.95), another fat volume from her Union/Alliance universe of future space politics. The basic idea is good: re-establishing contact with a collapsed human colony whose members have grown into symbiosis with aliens who think by quite different rules. There's also a cleverly nasty rationale (resembling a Le Carré ploy) for the colony's initial failure. The trouble is that Cherryh takes 200 pages to set this up, with blow-by-blow accounts of the collapse and oodles of military-communication hokum, after which the plot starts moving in peculiar jerks. You feel there's been too much background information and not enough about what's happening now. An interesting read, but little is lost by skimming the first half.

As for dear old Ted Tubb's *Nectar of Heaven* (*Arrow* 160pp £1.75) . . . long-term readers of the Dumarest series will almost be forced to skim this 24th volume. Once again Earl Dumarest follows a false trail in search of Earth, which he long ago mislaid. Again he encounters formulaic battle, murder and sudden death, eventually outwitting the sinister brains of the Cyclan. And again Tubb clears the ground for the next sequel with alarming efficiency: the woman with whom Dumarest's got involved is as usual wasted, and he *gives away* the vast wealth which would make his quest a damn sight easier. So, as always, there's a clean slate for book 25, in which I predict Dumarest will arrive moneyless on a new and savage world, tepidly pursued by the all-potent yet ludicrously inefficient Cyclan, and . . . *et cetera*.

A footnote for those worried about loony fundamentalists banning fantasy games: let me recommend a triffic book on their US efforts to ban the cornerstone of modern biology. *Science and Creationism* ed Ashley Montagu (*OUP* 416pp £7.95) has essays by many famous names including Isaac Asimov (whose *Counting the Eons* is yet another OK science-essay collection – *Grafton* 254pp £2.50), and reveals just how intellectually poverty-stricken the creationist movement is. Academic bloodshed on a vast scale: I loved it. It's a sadly true bit of publishing lore that a sane book like this will never sell as well as something titled (to choose an example at random) *Sex Secrets of Ancient Atlantis*. . . . □

2020 Vision *is a bimonthly column covering fantasy and science fiction movies, written by Colin Greenland.*

GETTING THE FRIGHT RIGHT

It must be a headache making a horror movie these days. With technical effects of ever-increasing cunning, it's possible to show the most graphic mutations and mutilations, to a public which seems able to stomach them all cheerfully and demand more. Campaigners for censorship often overlook the fact that fans of slash-and-slay pictures relish them not morbidly but as light relief from the actual, but less tangible, horrors that fill the papers and TV news. Condemnation by Mary Whitehouse may be the best advertisement of all; but no director wants to end with a film that makes the studio so nervous they won't release it. One answer seems to be – add comedy. A streak of satire, a pinch of farce demonstrate you're not taking your necromantics too seriously, and that the audience shouldn't either. Balancing the mixture, though – that needs skill.

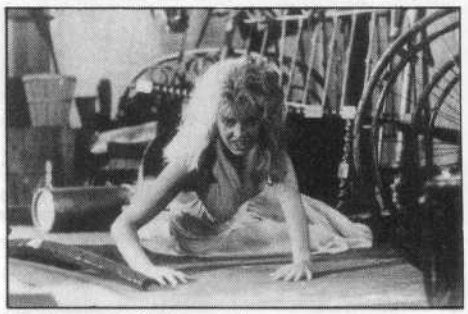
The Return of the Living Dead (Tartan, 18) is the first film to be directed by Dan O'Bannon, co-writer of *Dark Star, Alien* and *Lifeforce*. If you recall a previous movie entitled *Night of the Living Dead*, and directed by George Romero, well, so did Romero, and he sued. This one got made anyway, more as a homage than a rip-off. Barrels of zombies from the original story have been misrouted by a bureaucratic cock-up to the basement of a medical supplies firm. One springs a leak, and fairly soon all the cadavers and specimens upstairs are twitching into macabre and lethal action. Meanwhile in the graveyard next door the local punks are having a party. . . . The movie sprawls shapelessly but comfortably, with plenty of gruesome jokes. The two men minding the store inhale toxic fumes from the barrels and pass straight from being alive to being undead without noticing. There's a hilarious moment of embarrassment when their colleagues and assembled paramedics realise the pair have shuffled off this mortal coil, but don't know how to break the news to them.

Fright Night (Columbia, PG), is also a directorial debut for Tom Holland, who wrote the recent *Cloak and Dagger*, a film about a boy obsessed with a spy role-playing game. Here, it's a boy obsessed with old monster movies, who discovers his new neighbour is a vampire but can't get anyone to believe him. Unfortunately Holland gets his mixture of humour and horror the wrong way round, setting up a gawky teen-comedy and letting it run on far too long before deluging it with buckets of blood. One boy, an exploitative little brat who would have been a sympathetic character if he hadn't been so badly acted, is suddenly staked to the parquet, writhing through the most nightmarish transformations since *The Company of Wolves* – shocking, certainly, but callous, as is the lingering scene where the medallion-man vampire gropes a schoolgirl at the disco. We may be justified in suspecting that a film which has such contempt for its characters has contempt for its audience too.

Teen Wolf (Entertainment, PG) goes too far the other way. It's so careful to cater to the kiddies that it collapses into trite moralism and cliché – a shame after a wonderful beginning. Michael J Fox (who went on to star in *Back to the Future*) is delightfully perplexed as Scott, who finds growing up brings many unexpected bodily changes: hair, claws, fangs and pointy ears. The movie's best joke is the scene where dad demands to know why his son's hiding in the bathroom all the time. But after that it's all downhill. Anxious that their movie should be perfectly wholesome, clean and bloodless, writers and director forgot Scott was supposed to be a werewolf, and made him a basketball star instead.

Back! Back, you cross-eyed son of a film critic!

The London Film Festival does great things by way of airing all kinds of films from all over the world, but it does incidentally emphasize how far commercial success is a function not of quality, but of the machinery of fame. Fantasy films guaranteed large audiences, for example, are *A Zed and Two Noughts*, Peter Greenaway's elaborate conundrum about animals, amputations and the letters of the alphabet, and *Shadey*, a first film from satirical playwright Snoo Wilson, in which a sad young misfit with a supernatural power tries to sell his services to industry and gets chewed up by military intelligence. The screens of the 1985 Festival will have been dark for several months by the time you read this, but not everything first shown there automatically gets a general release. For every *Turtle Diary* or *Back to the Future* there's a real gem still waiting for a British distributor: *Out of the Darkness*, for instance, in which three visiting children see a ghost in a Derbyshire village and become gradually and perilously involved in the reparation of a terrible crime three centuries old. John Kirsh, directing on a tiny budget with four 'stars' who'd never acted before, has created a vivid and enthralling mystery ten times better than the ghastly *Goonies*.



Push me out of bed, would you . . .

Two excellent programmes of animation included the strange and spiky *This Unnameable Little Broom*, an insectile fever-dream; Canada's *The Big Snit*, in which a couple squabbling over *Scrabble* manage to miss World War Three; and a sombre vision of the Day After, in an American home occupied only by robots and ash: *There Will Come Soft Rains*, made in Russia from a story by Ray Bradbury! But for me the prize was an enchanting French animated fantasy adventure, *Gwen*. A 13-year-old girl and her 173-year-old companion cross a desert strewn with giant furniture and bedclothes, to find a decaying city where solemn priests lead the people in chants taken from their sacred book, a mail-order catalogue ('Rust-resistant watering-can . . .'). It is the age after the Storm when the Gods abandoned the World, all but the one amnesiac, amorphous God who sleeps in a swimming pool, dreaming of rust-resistant watering-cans. Join me now in this heartfelt prayer: 'Take back *Fright Night*. Give us *Gwen*!' □

THRUD THE BARBARIAN IN THRUD GETS A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE
HELLO READERS - HERE I AM ONCE AGAIN BECAUSE I HAVE RECEIVED SEVERAL COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE ALLEGED SEXIST NATURE OF THIS STRIP. SO THIS MONTH I'VE DECIDED TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT THEREFORE MAY I PRESENT....
© CARL CRITCHLOW 1986.
OUR STEREOTYPED PERSON OF DISTINGUISHED VALOUR IS JUST LEAVING HIS FAVOURITE MALE ORIENTATED SOCIAL SITUATION (IN OTHER WORDS OUR HERO IS LEAVING THE PUB) WHEN...
LYMARA! - WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE? YOU CAN'T BE IN THIS MONTH'S EPISODE!
WHY NOT?
WELL I'M SUPPOSED TO BE SHOWING OUR READER THAT THIS ISN'T THE SEXIST CRAP HE, SHE OR IT THINKS. BUT IS IN FACT A CAREFULLY THOUGHT OUT SEQUENTIAL NARRATIVE WITH A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF IMPORTANT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES!
WHICH IS PRETTY TOUGH GOING ANYWAY - WITHOUT YOU WANDERING AROUND WEARING A BROAD SMILE AND VERY LITTLE ELSE!
DON'T YOU REALISE THAT BY DRESSING LIKE THAT YOU'RE REINFORCING PEOPLE'S IDEAS OF SEXUAL STEREOTYPES IN THE SWORD AND SORCERY GENRE?
OH, REALLY! AND HOW WOULD YOU SUGGEST I DRESSED - BAGGY KHAKI DUNGEREES, AND SAVE THE GAY WHALE T-SHIRT I SUPPOSE?
AND ANYWAY - WHY IS IT THAT I'M REINFORCING SEXUAL STEREOTYPES DRESSING LIKE THIS - BUT YOU'RE NOT BY DRESSING THE SAME WAY?
IF THIS STRIP ISN'T SEXIST THEN WE'RE BOTH EQUAL - SO YOU MUST BE JUST AS SEXIST AS I AM - BECAUSE YOU'RE DRESSED THE SAME WAY!
ER?
I SUPPOSE SO - AH WELL, SO MUCH FOR THE CAREFULLY THOUGHT OUT SEQUENTIAL NARRATIVE BIT - FANCY A DRINK THEN DARLIN'?
SLAP!
?
SEXIST PIG!

RUNEQUEST

RUMINATIONS

Thoughts on RuneQuest 3, from Oliver Dickinson

Glorantha-addicts should now have the message that we have not been forgotten in the change-over to *RQ3*; in fact, we shall shortly experience an information explosion, which should be more enriching than the great sequence from *Cults of Prax* to *Pavis* in terms of our knowledge of Glorantha. Start saving now! (I hope prices may drop a bit, but won't take bets on it.) Of course, all the new stuff will be *RQ3*. I am not in touch with many people these days, so have no idea what the general reaction to *RQ3* is. Many published comments have been hostile in varying degrees, and not just about the price – such as Dave Morris' in *WD69* (not really justified, as pointed out by Rick Crofts in *WD71*). Personally, I take very seriously Greg Stafford's comment that *RQ3* reflects his conception of Glorantha *better*, and I welcome most of the changes and innovations, particularly Fatigue Points.

I approve of the principle behind Fatigue Points – that there should be an objective way of registering the effect of prolonged exertion. One major consequence of this is that heavily-armed hundred-percenters become easier to cope with in a relatively short time, if you can keep them at bay that long. (Don't ask me what happens with Heroes; I presume they obey different rules, but you shouldn't be trying to play a Hero in *RQ*!) FPs should make GMs and players think hard about loading characters and their mounts with armour and other gear. Here, I will take the opportunity to decry the creation of NPCs like some in *Vikings* and the *Monster Coliseum*, who *start* with negative FPs; this may not be quite the equivalent of starting off tired, but it does represent a heavy burden, such as would only be undertaken exceptionally (perhaps on some journey of desperation, or by safety-first types like traditional Mostali). I believe that in general there is a strong case for banning such a practice; the vastly increased cost and weight of the better types of armour should make them much rarer, anyway.

I speak of this and matters following with some experience to back me up, since I have managed to find the time to run some of my player characters through several *RQ3* scenarios. As you might expect, I have found that the more familiar you become with a system, the more you turn up doubtful points and grey areas, just as happened with *RQ2*.

A point that has caused me most unease is the effect of encumbrance on casting spirit magic (*RQ2* battle magic), the type PCs and NPCs will use most often, unless they are excessively powerful Runemasters or sorcerers. (It looks like taking so long to reach a level of competence in sorcery that one can have some hope of relying on, that I haven't bothered to develop any sorcerer PCs.) As things stand, one loses 1% from the chance of casting Spirit Magic (POW x 5) for each point of ENC; so a character with average POW 10, carrying spear, shortsword, 12-point shield, and 2 or 3-point armour, will have a 39% chance of casting successfully. You *really* aren't going to roll that too often! Increasing the chance by the use of Ceremony is all very well, but not very practical when under attack (since you cannot do anything else while casting a spell), and it requires at least 3 MR to give a chance of a really significant improvement (+1d6% per MR for the first 3 MR added to casting time). Yet every failed spell costs you 1 Magic Point, so the average character cannot afford to fail very often. It seems to me that this is too hard; who would bother with Spirit Magic if it was so chancy?

I understand that *Chaosium* may allow the addition of Magic Bonus to the casting chance, but for most characters, even quite good ones, this will only add a few percent. So I have developed a variant, which I offer for consideration. This is to deduct only 1% for each point of ENC over half the character's maximum (STR + CON). In general this gives a much more reasonable chance, even to the heavily armoured, though it has still been possible for POW12 trolls to fail *healing* spells, even using Ceremony. Of course, you could ignore the ENC effect altogether. The variant would apply to the chance of casting other magic (following a *Chaosium* errata list, ENC now affects casting Sorcery spells), and could also be applied to ENC's similar effect on Dodge and Sneak, but I haven't tried that. The former would be the more plausible, since it is surely easier to adapt one's actions to the weight of armour rather than to its noisemaking ability. As things stand, I feel that Dodge is pretty useless, since ENC will reduce it to the basic 5% in many cases. Have you all noticed, by the way, that you cannot parry as well as attack with the same one-handed weapon in the same MR (PB p48), but must Dodge if you have no shield? I am not happy about this one.

Another problem thrown up by by my characters' experiences was the effect of Special Hits with smashing and slashing weapons. In *RQ3* all one gets is an automatic knockback of 1 metre per 5 points of damage, plus a chance to knock down others, take further damage through collisions, etc. Between two characters of similar size this will seem reasonable, but what if a trollkin hits a great troll or an assault beetle (which with 6 legs might have a better chance of keeping position than anything 2-legged), to say nothing of those rare occasions when one might be fighting a dinosaur or dragon (as in *Borderlands*), or even a giant? It is obviously ridiculous to cause a knockback in such circumstances. Moreover, the knockback is not much of a benefit compared with an Impale, but I am reluctant to believe that a well-sharpened sword or axe, at least, is that much less effective than a spear. I suggest reverting to maximum damage, from which armour and protective spells are subtracted, or rolling dice twice, as now for Impales, or reviving the old Slash and Crush rules. A knockback could also happen, and might result from some Impales (especially by a mounted lancer), perhaps on a successful STR vs SIZ roll or at the GM's discretion.

Such points arise from considerations of realism, and of course there is a limit to what can be introduced to reflect reality without snowing the GM under with tables and dice rolls; I therefore propose alternatives rather than additions. While on the topic of realism, I will mention something I have not usually had to complain about – *under*powered NPCs. The Civilised Levy in *Monster Coliseum* and the ordinary Greenbrass farmers are light on magic, for as (almost certainly) Initiates they would get 1 free point per 5 years/fraction thereof, so should have at least 2 points of Spirit Magic if in their twenties, as one would expect, and they might well have bought more. They might also have higher POWs, since they get 1 point per 3 years, or have sacrificed for at least 1 one-use Rune spell, probably some high quality *healing* spell. The Previous Experience rules, which I follow here, should, in my opinion, be the essential guide to creating NPCs, indicating how long it takes to reach really high levels of skill. Too often, I suspect, PCs and NPCs are created without really taking into account the plausibility of what they are supposed to have achieved by their (usually youthful) age. But at least a Priest, now getting 1 POW point per year automatically, can build up a large number of Rune points, and is no longer required to maintain a POW of 18.

Finally, a few miscellanea:

Aiming: Greg agreed that the rules used for melee weapons should apply to missiles too.

Disruption: Two good questions on the topic.

1. (Simon Phipp): Does the *disruption* effect in *warding* or *creature market* need to overcome the victim's POW? Apparently not, it is automatic, but a good question, for why should it be?

2. (Tim Minas): If an allied spirit bound in a weapon casts a *disruption* that is *reflected*, does the weapon take damage? I see no reason why not; but note that in *RQ3 reflection* is very rare, apparently available only to Trickster cults.

That's all for now; watch yer topknots! □

HOW TO SAVE THE UNIVERSE

The Delights of Superhero Gaming Revealed by Pete Tamlyn

'In my opinion, comics are intended *for readers of age 8 to 13... Thus they are childish (of or like or proper to a child) ... Likewise* Golden Heroes *is also childish as it is based on these comics.'*

Who was that then? Readers who can remember back as far as issue *69's* letter column may recognise the inimitable George Stepanek. The above quotation comes from a letter he wrote to a fanzine, *Next Stop Jupiter*, and is fairly typical of many people's attitudes towards Superhero rolegames.

George, I should add, is a converted ex-comic reader and therefore has far better grounds for his views than many similar detractors. Also much of what he said in the rest of his letter about the literary value of comics is well founded. However, there is no hard and fast rule which says that good rolegames can only spring from good literature. Rather it is the type of setting that is important, everything else being up to the rules writer and games master. I believe that the Superhero setting contains many elements which make it ideal for rolegaming. This article explains why.

It's Clobberin' Time

In attempting such an article I am well aware that people's tastes in rolegaming vary enormously. One man's exciting, non-stop action is another man's boring hack and slay. Therefore I do not expect everything I say to appeal to every reader. Indeed, some of the points I raise in parts of the article will be in danger of putting some people off Superhero games for life. Please don't be discouraged by this. No rolegaming system is perfect, but it is possible to appeal to all of the people part of the time. Superhero games do contain something to satisfy most tastes, and I will do my best in this article to point out what sort of player these games appeal to and why others should not be put off.

We shall start at a fairly basic level by noting that in a superhero game each player's character starts off as a hero whose abilities far outstrip those of ordinary people. A lot of people see this is a disadvantage, equating it with starting the game with the sort of overkill now commonplace in *AD&D*. (The average level of *AD&D* characters these days, according to *TSR*, is 16.) What people forget is that first level characters in *AD&D* are supposed to be well above average. Gary Gygax says as much every time he tries to justify the character class system.

Now I have played in some role-playing games where you have to start right from the bottom, and I have to admit that staggering around one campaign trying to catch a few rabbits to keep from starving was very entertaining at times. For the most part, however, players like to have characters who can do something impressive right from the start, even if they still have a lot to learn. Besides, as we shall discuss later, Superhero games have a moral basis which makes it easy for the GM to crack down on the sort of unrestrained use of power and gratuitous slaughter that is all too common in other games.

The existence of Superheroes also solves one of the most common problems with rolegaming systems – a rationale for adventuring. A brief survey of the 'realism' debate will bring to light a whole string of comments along the lines of 'if the game was at all lifelike my character would have far more sense than to run around fighting dragons'. This is a valid criticism, and in my own fantasy campaign I found that a lot of players did more or less retire from adventuring. Some for the quiet life, and some simply because they found politics or business more interesting. In a Superhero game the reasons for adventuring are far more obvious and easy to justify.

There are other problems too with 'realistic' games. Why do the authorities tolerate these bands of cut-throats roaming the countryside robbing and looting? Why hasn't some great king or wizard driven all the monsters from the land? Why should a bloodthirsty knight, pious priest and peasant thief band together like they do? A good GM can provide rationales for all this, but in doing so he is essentially producing, often with a great deal of effort, what comes free with a Superhero game: a setting in which the hero is an accepted and essential part of the background.

It may well seem, of course, that modern governments would be unwilling to tolerate groups of bizarrely clad vigilantes running around their countries, but comics' writers realised this long ago, and if you want to run the sort of game where the heroes are hated and hunted by normal humanity there are plenty of role models available.

To summarise thus far, then, Superhero games do provide for player characters who are immeasurably more powerful than ordinary men and this should appeal to those amongst you who start your *AD&D* characters off at 10th level because they are too wimpy below that. But the fact that the players start off super-powerful does plug an embarrassing gap in the rationale for a realistic game, and plenty of means are available within the accepted game structure to limit players' freedom to use their powers if this is what the GM wishes.

Talking of background, setting up a campaign is also much easier with Superheroes than with most other games. Fantasy and SF campaigns both require a hefty amount of sub-creation of an alternative world or universe. A historical game requires historical knowledge. Of all the types of rolegames on the market, only the Superhero, secret agent and horror genres permit the use of a modern setting. Of these, only the Superhero game has the characters continuously interacting with the society in which they live, allowing the GM to make full use of contemporary news

stories, books and TV series for background material.

Comic Relief

No game comes with quite so much readily available source material as a Superhero game. But this is not all. Most games are based in a world defined by a set of books. Superhero games have this too. Not quality literature perhaps (though little enough fantasy, SF or horror is either), but there's lots of it and it is being continuously added to at a rate of hundreds of pages a month. What is more, thanks to Stan Lee's insistence on the consistency of the *Marvel* Universe, and the commercial success of that idea, the quality of sub-creation (and hence usable campaign background) can be quite high.

A letter in an earlier issue of *White Dwarf* said that because Superhero comics are aimed at children (note that line of attack again) they don't have to be totally consistent. This is a common fallacy. Perhaps in a strict scientific sense they don't, otherwise none of the powers would work, but I can poke similar holes in almost anything (except possibly a Coronation Street role-playing game). In fact the Superhero setting is one which has been designed for an 'anything goes' approach.

Once you accept the basic premise of the genre, almost anything else follows naturally. Aliens, time travel, magic: you name it and comics have done it. You may have to be a bit careful in a campaign to scatter the wilder adventures judiciously amongst a regular fare of traditional crime-fighting but the possibilities are genuinely endless. Indeed, 'comics' does not necessarily mean Superhero comics. There are comics featuring Conan, Dr Who and Indiana Jones. Because comics-based games have to try to cover all of this you can actually make a case for running any sort of game with Superhero rules. Simon Burley and Pete Haines, authors of the *Golden Heroes* game, are actively considering science fiction and swords & sorcery supplements for their creation.

Superhero games, therefore, make it very easy for a GM to produce either a one-off scenario (just nick a plot from one of the many comics available) or a long-running campaign. If you and your players enjoy having space travel, time travel, science and sorcery in the same game it can be done, but there is no reason why a more conservative group cannot spend all their time fighting crime on the streets of New York if that is what they prefer. There are plenty of comics covering both styles.

But Seriously, Folks . . .

Okay, let's stop for a moment and take stock. Thus far I may well have confirmed the worst fears of many people who regard themselves as 'Serious Rolegamers'. 'Incredibly powerful characters? Anything goes? He can't possibly be a *true* role-player.' Just to ram the message home once more, comics can be pure escapism, but as escapist settings go they are remarkably easy to convert to a highly internally consistent rolegame. Also, they don't have to be purely escapist. 'Serious' rolegaming is possible, even promoted.

One of the first things your 'serious' rolegamer is likely to object to is the high degree of stereotyping prevalent in Superhero comics. There is no doubt that comics can be very poor literature, and it is reasonable to argue that if all the available role models are stereotypes this is hardly likely to encourage rolegamers to rise above stereotyping in their own characters. On the other hand, how many well-rounded, thoroughly believable characters have you seen in rolegames anyway. Not many, I'll bet.

Arguing for quality role-playing is all very well, but to play a convincing role you have to be a good actor. Rolegames are not an attempt to put a miniature Royal Shakespeare Company in every living room. They are, if they are theatre at all, popular, amateur dramatics. Nowadays it is fashionable to sneer at such things as melodramas and Gilbert & Sullivan because of the simplicity of plot and characterisation, but given an amateur theatre company they are probably a much better bet than Chekov because a simple, stereotyped role is easier for a poor actor to play well.

The same holds true for rolegames. Give a player a deep and complex character like Gandalf or Frodo Baggins and in most cases you will get a stereotyped result that is mostly the player's own character and which makes a mockery of the original role. Give him a simple, uncomplicated role like the Incredible Hulk and he will probably be very convincing.

All this does not mean that

you cannot produce good characterisation if you want to. Changing the analogy for a while, suppose you take a random sample of people and give them a musical instrument to play. If the instrument is a saxophone maybe only one in ten will produce anything approaching a tune. But if it is a recorder most people should be able to manage something whilst the talented musicians will stand out. Catering for the lowest common denominator is not always a mistake.

Many of you, I know, will regard all this wittering on about characterisation and and quality acting unnecessary and pretentious. OK, carry on the way you are. Though you may just find that, in Superhero games, the fact that you are given very simple roles will make role-playing easier, the game atmosphere better, and your enjoyment of the experience that much greater.

Missing Links

In addition to providing simple roles, Superhero games have a powerful aid towards interesting dramatic situations that many other games lack: an ethical basis. This is useful in a number of ways. To start with a general theme to a game is always a good means of lending purpose and direction to play. *Call of Cthulhu* has a theme that helps tie together many very different stories. The players have a reason to go from one adventure to another above and beyond simple curiosity and sensation seeking. *AD&D* does not have such an overall rationale and the result is often an undignified orgy of greed and slaughter with a continual quest for new monsters to relieve the boredom.

As was argued above, the fact that a Superhero is supposed to be a brave defender of society provides the GM with all sorts of methods for hedging the players with responsibilities which both restrain indiscriminate use of power and produce all sorts of interesting game situations.

How, for instance, do you capture a psychopathic killer in a crowded shopping centre without anyone getting killed? Is it justifiable to use your atomic energy blasts to flatten a female villain when you know she is pregnant and the radiation might kill the baby? What do you do when you know that you have just saved Earth from an alien invasion but the government, unwilling to alarm the population, insists on hushing it all up and blaming you for all the damage? And how do you explain to your boss that the reason you have been absent from work for three days was that you were captured by Dr Destruction and held prisoner in a fiendish death trap on a remote Pacific island?

Indeed, as Superheroes are supposed to be such goody-goodies, we can happily thumb our noses both at the dangerous fanatics of the Moral Majority who believe that all rolegaming is devil worship, and at the tedious, left-wing killjoys who believe that anything remotely connected with wargames is inherently militaristic and should be banned.

Yet again, those of you who like your role-playing simple and uncomplicated by difficult moral choices can blast away at supervillains to your heart's content. Indeed, the chaotic-evils amongst you could play supervillains if you wanted. Many rule systems discourage it but there is nothing about the genre that actively prevents it. However, for those of you that want it, a far more complicated, and to my mind more interesting game is easily available with the aid of an imaginative GM.

Pass the Shark-Repellent Bat-Spray . . .

What I have said so far will, hopefully, have convinced many of you that Superhero games are not as boring as you might have thought. Raw power is there if you want it. Interesting campaigns and dramatic situations are easily developed. Even those of you who fill dungeons with mathematical puzzles should find that it doesn't matter what setting you choose for your problem-solving.

There is an enormous variety of styles of comics to choose from. You don't have to be as saintly as Batman or Captain America; you don't even need to come out with such classic lines as 'Holy Aerial Cupcakes, Bruce, it's a flying saucer!'

I guess that there may still be some of you out there who would be just plain embarrassed to imagine yourselves running round the countryside in a gaudy costume. Maybe you're right. But then again don't those *Treasure Trap* types in fur rugs and leather, or *Star Trek* fans in false Spock ears look weird. And aren't all *Cthulhu* investigators mad anyway? Compared to that lot, what's so odd about a Superhero? □

GAMESMANSHIP

Putting the mystery back into AD&D, by Martin Hytch

Fantasy literature has always been about the unknown, and the excitement and fear connected with it. The aim of this article is to suggest ways of improving role-playing, and the atmosphere in which it is conducted, by injecting a little mystery into the proceedings.

Can you remember your first adventure? I'll certainly not forget mine – it was such an experience. The wonder and the mystery were the greatest part; the plot, setting and the reality of the situation were totally unimportant. Clutching my ten-foot pole, lantern and longsword, I crept down the ten-foot wide corridor. Suddenly I came upon a skeleton guarding a door – all I could think of was Jason and the Argonauts, and with no handy cliffs in sight, I fled blindly away. My escape was short-lived because I ran straight into another of the creatures. Not knowing what to do I flailed at it with my sword and by some miracle (or so I thought at the time) I destroyed it. And so it went on – a bewilderment of monsters and treasure until I staggered out of the dungeon dazed, but eager for another adventure. I'm sure that many other gamers' experiences were similar. Wouldn't it be great if every adventure could be like that? Unfortunately when you're older and 'wiser', after a lot of roll-playing (not role-playing), it becomes more like this:

'You look around the dark and shadowy room and your eyes fix on a mist forming in the corner of the room. There is a faint moaning as a cloaked figure emerges – old and haggard it reaches out its hand towards you.'

'See the wall through it, can we?' the players interject.

'Err, yes.'

'It must be a ghost. Anyone know its stats?'

'Yeh, AC0, magic weapons, age attack, HP. . . . '

'Thanks, send in the elf and I'll fireball it.'

Consequently the ghost gets atomized and the players look for something more 'interesting'. This situation is regrettable for both dungeon master and players as adventuring becomes more like wargaming instead of role-playing. It's fine if that's what you're interested in but I think that mystery is so basic to fantasy in general that the unknown and the aspects of role-playing should be brought out to the full.

Having decided that mystery is a good idea, how do you go about injecting this into your campaign? Firstly the players should be told as little as possible. Tell them the bare minimum of what the character could possibly know – err on the side of too little information. Practically, this can be very useful when running a campaign. For instance, the number of arguments would be greatly reduced since I find that most arguments are based on the interpretation of the rules. If the DM is the only one to have read the rules then he has the only valid interpretation, and so long as he is consistent, the players have nothing to base their arguments on. If you have the chance to buy another game system (what, play something other than *AD&D*?!) then hold on to the rule books – all of them – and ask the players not to read them (I include the players' handbook). Don't even read all the rules yourself! All sections on standard procedure must be read of course. This allows you to absorb the rules gradually, and leaves you with something that you can add later when you're bored or fancy some new ideas. Players who haven't read the rules will be unable to spring anything 'new' on you. If, however, a player is interested in a particular section you can then familiarise yourself with that area. Some games even suggest rules which can be added sequentially, though in a more limited fashion.

What if you can't afford a new system which your players don't know, or if you want to adapt your old system? This is a difficult task especially if all the players have been dungeon masters at one time or another. The first step is to explain to them what you are trying to do, and insist that from now on they must play in character, 'forget' all they know about the system, and not read the rule books. If the players really want to role-play they will try hard not to let prior knowledge interfere with their decisions. This is very difficult to achieve but is equally rewarding. To help them, tell them that you have made several alterations to the rules and that these will be explained when necessary. Don't tell them which rules have been altered (or to what extent), so that the players will not be confident of any presumptions they may make. Hopefully players will take a pride in their role-playing ability, and competition with the other players will probably spur them on more than any amount of encouragement from you could. Pick up any mistakes they make (for example, if they say something their character wouldn't know) and correct them. I wouldn't bother with players who don't try; chuck them out after trying repeated warnings or docking of experience points due to bad play. With any luck role-playing won't be hindered too much by prior knowledge, and the procedures suggested can be adopted from the rest of the article.

MONSTERS

Remember the poor ghost and its fate? Ghosts are great unexplained phenomenon, so it is a pity to reduce such creatures to a load of statistics. Most DMs get bored with building up a scene if it is not appreciated and gets demolished so quickly, and just end up saying 'There's a ghost'. Now if the players haven't met such a creature before or don't recognise it as a ghost then the situation is totally different. What is it? How do we fight it? Should we fight it? The tension mounts as the players worry about what they should do. Bear this uncertainty in mind when designing the encounter so that they don't have to do exactly what's best (sending in the elf, etc) in order to survive. Quick thinking will still be rewarded as the ghost could attack while they are still unprepared. Note discussions will be character discussions and also in real time – so arguments will alert other hostiles and waste time. Good role-playing should not be penalised if players don't draw on past information. It will be perfectly obvious to the DM, and more importantly the other players, when someone cheats if their character has never encountered a ghost before. If a character *does* know about ghosts this will reveal something of his past to the other players.

For players who haven't read the rules they might have even met a ghost before without realising it. By dressing up basic encounters in different ways it's amazing what you can disguise. Players would have to recognise monsters by their characteristics and not their names. The same goes for hit points (which are frequently abused). These are pretty well the only way to adjudicate damage, and yet if used too much they can destroy the atmosphere and their original purpose. They should be used solely for bookkeeping and not as a gauge of the strength of monsters. Characters in a fantasy world don't go around quoting hit points so neither should the players. Telling a fighter he has lost eleven hit points can have a totally different effect if the DM says 'The beast strikes you in the face, breaking your nose.' You start building a much better picture of your character's health even though you still know how many hit points you lost. This is the basis for a hit location system. It's unfortunate that players need to know their hit point total at all. Players should not know other people's hit points and certainly never a monster's hit points. Try and stop players gauging monsters' hit points by adding up how much damage they've done. If hit points are not known to them, they are more likely to think of monsters as their characters would – how long it took to kill it, (if they succeeded), how many strikes; how much damage they took themselves, and so on. If there was no combat, they would consider instead the monster's bargaining power, intelligence, trustfulness and

GAMESMANSHIP
Putting the mystery back into AD&D, by Martin Hytch

perhaps helpfulness. Orcs would become more than predictable 1HD monsters and perhaps more like this old veteran's tale: 'Orcs, yes, I've met with them before. My brother and I stood together against at least three-score. We fought for hours and although they fled in the end, we were sorely wounded.'

You could wonder at the terrible might of higher level monsters – the power of ancient dragons would be assumed to be awesome after having conflicts with younger types. Unfortunately dragons in *AD&D* are something to be squashed for their treasure when supplies run low. They are certainly not the majestic creatures of legend. *C&S* redresses the balance where only a dragon-slayer may have a picture of one on his shield: these men are people to fear and respect. Players cannot be cavalier about their attitude towards monsters if they don't know all their abilities – those who are will get a nasty surprise one day.

The greatest power to have over an opponent is to know their strengths and weaknesses; that is why a player character class with this ability would be banned – and yet most players have read the *Monster Manual*! Even when you've killed a monster, was it a particularly weak one? It would be very easy to keep the interest of players in monsters if they never knew for sure whether they were just lucky. With the true statistics and abilities remaining unknown, previously encountered monsters could still prove to be an interesting problem – no need for millions of new, and sometimes illogical, monsters. In fantasy books there are rarely more than a few main monsters. A small change in familiar monsters would produce a whole new range of possibilities, keeping the battle going between old adversaries.

MAGIC

The magical and mystical often go together, their unknown qualities instilling fear or superstition, but more usually, excitement in fantasy readers and players. Magic should *always* have that air of mystery about it and it should never be humdrum. Magic items then should be things of wonder and awe, not just 'another piece of equipment'. If they appear too frequently there is a danger that they will be taken for granted.

The other extreme is to have very few magic items but this leads to squabbles because their unfair distribution within a group becomes inevitable. One of the means of player reward would be cut short and if, to alleviate the situation, the magic items are made more powerful, game imbalance could easily occur. Either way players become expert at collecting magic items – before a magic-user hits the deck he's usually been stripped of all rings, wands, amulets, necklaces, bracers, etc by the scavenging characters: certainly not the occupation of an honourable knight. But who can blame them when you can get decked out like Christmas trees with magic items? Next comes the sorting stage where players systematically test the items. Attempts range from thrusting torches into the faces of players wearing new rings to dunking their heads under water. DMs can go to ridiculous lengths to hide the identity of standard magic items (as per the *DMG* but they should *never* be standard). In the end the players give up in frustration or the item is neatly classified and filed. Not the kind of thing you would want to happen to Nizor the Wizard's last great work!

The alternative is to treat magic in a different and more flexible way. Rarely in books do you read of characters continually picking up and dropping magical items as they find something new. You lose that continuity and familiarity with, say, a trusty sword that has been with you through thick and thin. Does this mean that when a character gains something special it has to be very powerful so that it can 'survive' their increase in levels? Not necessarily, because not all of its powers need to be revealed at the start. Power words and the meaning of engraved runes may be required to activate the device. A focus might be required, for instance, like a special gem screwed into the hilt of a sword, to reveal new powers. Searching for these requirements can be an excellent basis for further adventures or quests. The item could react to the character enhancing its abilities as the character increases in power himself. New functions could appear when a character reaches a certain level of achievement. Perhaps only the power of an archmage is strong enough to unleash and control (?) the magic of an ancient staff. Even when powers are revealed do not give the players the full details, because there may still be some surprises in store. The *Wand of Wonder* is many a player's and DM's favourite magic item simply because of its unpredictability. A player who tests it, finds it does a lightning bolt, and then classifies it as a *Wand of Lightning Bolts* is in for a shock – hopefully hilarious rather than fatal: a warning that magic moves in mysterious ways. Secrecy means that you can still keep control of a magic item and could change your mind over its powers – perhaps toning them up or down to prevent game imbalance without upsetting the players. The classic example is Bilbo's ring – that little unassuming *Ring of Invisibility*. Of course not all magic items would have such an enormous effect on the campaign world but they all should have some history. The more powerful, then the more history there is attached to the item. This gives the players the interesting possibility of researching the item's past and perhaps getting a hint to its secret abilities. Even for the lowliest of magic items at least the previous owner and his (or its) fate should be known, perhaps even the maker's. Magic items should be important so flesh them out!

Magic items which show particular affinity to a character are always interesting. They are a tool sometimes used by unscrupulous DMs to split a party by jealousy. The affinity is most interesting if there's some logical reason behind it. The other players may get clues as to the nature of the previous owner, the item and even the player concerned (why the player information should be of use is detailed in the next section).

Take, for example, a talisman of 'gold seeking' (or so the players think). It is strange because it 'fails' to glow in the presence of gold sometimes and shows an affinity for the only dwarf in the party. Only the dwarf can notice that the talisman glows just in the presence of dwarfish gold – the difference between this and normal gold known only to that race. Even then the deduction is not easy because, firstly, dwarfish gold is rarely found pure; secondly, despite its rarity it is usually amongst a cache of normal gold; and finally, the talisman glows with an intensity which is independent of the amount of dwarvish gold present, being based purely upon range. The glow is, in fact, merely a side effect of its true power. The talisman was worn by a master goldsmith who forged the great crowns of the ancient dwarf kings. Since its loss the dwarf kingdom has been on the decline and there have been several disputes over the succession to the throne and battles between rival factions. Eventually such troubles died down and for hundreds of years the dwarfs have lived in separated groups with no true king. If the identity of the talisman is found the players may start wondering if there is any truth in the legends of a lost heir to unite the dwarfs again. The dwarf may certainly get excited if the talisman doesn't show such an affinity for other dwarfs – perhaps he is destined for great things. The other characters would certainly show mixed reactions (with realisations coming at different times), especially if the dwarf tried to keep the possibility quiet. Perhaps it would be worth showing the 'stunted runt' some considerations if he might one day be very, very rich. Having a magic item which is special to you certainly makes you feel special also –

perhaps the character is. . . .

The powers themselves should not be straightforward. Don't tell the player, for example, the magic item has a range of 60' and unleashes 6d6 fireballs. Just let the player know what his character would know – the activation mode. When the character wishes to use it he says the power word or speaks the rune, or whatever, and you, the DM, decide the outcome. As with the dwarf's talisman, the item may not work in all circumstances but do have a logical reason for this dependence on its powers and history. Some items may function without asking, so to speak. For example, if one of the party members suddenly falls unconscious, what would the other members of the party think? The character wakes up after about a minute wondering what hit him. The party continues, somewhat perplexed, when later in the adventure they get plunged into darkness – unable to see a thing for about an hour wherever they move. Eventually they may discover the reason, although it might take several more weird happenings. The character knocked down carries a powerful protective device against scrying. Only by being unconscious did the high level location spell pass over his mind. Similarly the darkness prevented a crystal ball from finding him. The party would certainly wonder what was going on after perhaps being stone deaf for a while, like being in a *silence* spell. If they traced it to the item, would they keep it?

Magic should be as mysterious as possible but don't confine these suggestions to items – places and people can be magical too. Magic was feared by people because they didn't understand it – so make the characters fear it too. You'll know you've succeeded when the fighters become very superstitious!

CHARACTERS

This section deals with the underused concept of characters being mysterious to each other. It is the area in which players can have the most fun.

To start with the players should not know each other's statistics. They should even actively prevent other players from finding them out. This will not only remove jealousy between players but perhaps allow players with unlucky rolls to make up for them by good role-playing. The characters would be judged by their deeds and not their abilities which can be misleading. The players would interact with each other like the characters in the fantasy world. Players, and more importantly the characters, would be always wondering what everyone else's abilities are. It's great fun trying to solve the mystery of the other characters *and* concealing your powers from those scheming players at the same time. In answer to the bright spark who says 'OK, let's put our cards on the table and work as a team,' say 'You first,' ask how he would phrase it as his character, and would he tell his strengths and weaknesses to a non-player character? Incorporating NPCs into the campaign becomes much easier because they will be as much an unknown quantity as the other players. NPCs and PCs will become more real and this will encourage good role-playing.

A past history given to each character will give the players something to build their personae on. I realise that many DMs don't believe that player characters should be special, but their past histories *can* be much more interesting (and magic items can show affinities towards them). Strange things might have happened – omens at birth, dreams as a child, a sinister stranger showing an interest in the child, an enemy made, or perhaps a friend. The player gets a feel for his character and the world he lives in. It is very difficult to build a character on no background at all – even impossible. Some things may not even be apparent to the character; unknown wheels may have been set into motion by his birth, or actions as a youth, for good or ill. The character would have to look into his past to find the answers. This necessitates having reasons for the portents and events to be worked out in advance. The classic example is the child with no parent(s) – who are they? This poser is not very interesting if player characters aren't special – he may be the heir to a . . . baker's shop!

The meeting of the party members is very important because it sets the scene for the whole campaign. If the players meet in a pub and suddenly become friends it signals dungeon-bashing. Introducing characters one at a time or with a (non-)player character friend maintains the identity of the player characters amongst the party, and sub-groups are set up immediately. Meetings with other characters would be detailed in the past history of the character involved. Is the friendship a real one or not? The non-player characters are added gently and become more acceptable (in fact, PCs are treated exactly as NPCs in the past history of other PCs). The assembly of a party will seem much more natural – whether it is fate or some other power at work. Once together sub-plots can be worked into the game, with characters not knowing who to trust. Whilst I don't agree with PCs trying to kill other party members, there are other intrigues possible – spying, stealing or misleading. Hopefully they will eventually become a team but only because the characters have acted in such a way – not just because they are player characters fighting the age-old battle against NPCs.

Why, then, did I say earlier not to let the players read the players' handbook of all things? For a start the other players' characters will be more of a mystery if you don't even know which character class they are or, rather, what that class is capable of. You would wonder at the abilities of the others as they would at yours. Some less experienced players amongst a more experienced party could hold their own if their abilities are not generally known. The other players would be unable to steamroller them into doing things by saying, for example: 'Come on cleric! Cast *cure serious* on me – I need about 10hp, and while you're about it turn those advancing zombies.' The cleric player will certainly lose all job satisfaction if his job's done for him!

Even you should not know the abilities of your character's class which are not yet open to you. What is possible at high level? Not knowing higher level powers will make you more satisfied with your current powers but you'll be still eager to gain more. Having another character will mean you can try another character class with most of the mystery still attached, making the freshness of a game system last longer. Even playing the same character class as before could be possible if, for example, you joined a different school of magic. I realise that some of my player suggestions are not always feasible, especially in *D&D* where the range of abilities is quite limited. If you are playing a first level fighter in *AD&D* what can you possibly hide about him? Magic-using classes will be more applicable in *D&D*, though in games such as *Rolemaster, Bushido* or *C&S* the range of skills is larger, allowing a greater variety between fighter classes. The DM will have to be more imaginative and add a few special abilities. Even so our fighter with a well-thought-out and interesting background will have plenty of secrets of his own.

How does the DM manage the situation with his players being so secretive? The problems associated with this encourage players to be open with each other – to save bother and brain-ache. Initially it means more work for the DM but less work in the long run, and the results can be very rewarding as you observe the players enjoying slipping into their characters.

The DM will also need to have 'out of game' sessions with individual players. The first will be the longest, barring quests, because the player must roll up his character, choose a class, have his background told and the relevant rules explained to him. Later sessions will be mainly instigated by the player to ex-plain to the DM his character's personality, plans and reactions to the people around him. He may wish to make magic items, speak in private to an NPC or go on a mission concerning his past. In a way players will be giving ideas to the DM about future adventures. If an understanding can be forged between each player and the DM, less time would be wasted by players wishing to speak to the DM secretly during games sessions because they could convey character actions and reactions in terms of a 'nod and a wink'. For instance, suppose a player wishes to use his stolen ring containing *haste* spells he might say 'I run as fast as I can,' and stare the DM in the eye. Such pre-arranged signals make the DM aware while leaving the other players unsuspecting.

A more direct form of communication is the passing of notes. It doesn't take as much time as you might think. In fact a concise, well-thought-out note given to the DM instead of a private chat is much quicker. If all players are encouraged to participate, note-sending becomes a normal procedure and does not give away a player doing an unusual action. The DM can ask for messages explaining characters' intentions and routines during, say, a journey or stop for the night. Players not doing anything special are requested to send blank notes to camouflage their inactivity. Thus notes, 'winks and nods' and out of game sessions can indeed keep the private intentions of characters private and for the DM only.

I hope this article has suggested a few ideas to spice up a campaign a little. Ultimately the less players know, the less the drain on the DM's creativity, and perhaps 'know-it-all' players will find greater pleasure from being plunged into a more unpredictable and mysterious world. □

(THIS EPISODE IS DEDICATED TO TOBE "LIFEFORCE" HOOPER, FOR PUTTING THE SEX AND FUN BACK INTO SF!)

To be Continued..

MASS MEDIA

Communication in Traveller, by Andrew Swift

It is reasonable to assume that man's curiosity and thirst for knowledge of the world about him will never cease. This means that some form of today's newspapers will always be around to pass on the news. As long as the need to be informed is there, then there will also be people who are willing to make money by providing it.

The main factor that governs the way news travels on a planet is technological development. This, in *Traveller*, is represented by Tech Level. This is only a very rough estimate of how developed an area is, and many other factors can alter the appearance of a newspaper. For example, a race of creatures without eyes could not use what we recognise as a newspaper. News may, in this way, be either helped or hindered by the natural abilities of the creatures passing it along.

The speed at which people can communicate and how quickly the rest of the population can be informed of events should be noted. The way a planet's population is informed determines other criteria, such as the length of time a group of criminals could stay hidden on planet before everyone knows that they are there and begin to look for them.

Up to Tech Level 1
The main method by which news can travel on a planet with little technological development is by word of mouth. News can travel from one town to the next in the form of rumours carried by people who travel the routes regularly, or by a travelling minstrel who travels from town to town, passing on what information he has for the price of a meal and a bed for the night.

Messages could be sent between towns by players if they have the money to pay for someone to travel the distance.

Up to Tech Level 3
The news will stop being so dependent on word of mouth, since writing should be in its rudimentary stages of development. The accuracy of messages no longer becomes reliant on the memory of the carrier. However, these written messages must still travel by the same methods as before, so they still rely on a messenger service of some kind.

Towns may, of course, employ a town crier who, along with the guardsmen, keeps a watch on the town during the night. During the day, town criers could well be used by the town hall, or the local ruling body to pass messages and news to the townsfolk. This would probably take place at a strategic point where a large number of people are likely to hear him, most probably the market place or the town square.

Up to Tech Level 7
The development of an accurate and reliable printing press heralds the coming of what we recognise as the newspaper. Along with this will come the poster, either advertising a local event, or posting notice of a wanted criminal.

This development of 'news' will attract many people who will try to make their fortunes giving the population 'what it wants to read'.

As a planet reaches the later stages of this development scale its communications ability will have stretched into the areas of radio and television. This means that along with the press, a planet will now be armed with the TV reporter who along with his television crew will be covering the newsworthy stories.

News will be big business. If the characters are involved in anything that is considered as a good story they will be besieged by the press, the TV, etc . . .

Up to Tech Level 10
The super-industries of newspaper and television will slowly become less and less of a monopoly as the microchip industry turns towards the news medium as an outlet. Soon paper will, much to the joy of conservationists, become an outdated method of displaying the news. 'Credit card' newspaper will become the sole survivor in the media war. Each day the news for that day will be transmitted to the credit card-sized receiver, provided that a weekly subscription is kept up-to-date. Otherwise, if the payment is not met, that card's specific code is activated and the receiver shuts itself down until the money is paid.

Once the news is inside the card it can easily be read by pushing it into a decoder (costing about Cr 2000 in its early stages, but as little as Cr 50 on more advanced planets). A standard ship's computer can display the news but it must have the decoding equipment specially built in.

Tech Level 11 and up.
The more advanced the planet, the more effectively news will travel. Contact lens television monitors to which the news can be transmitted, and which flash important news onto the wearer's actual line of vision; implants at the top of the spine to which the news can be transmitted and then fed directly into the creature's brain so that he actually knows the news as soon as it becomes available, are just a couple of ideas.

These ideas, of course, are based on a race of humanoid creatures with senses very similar to our own, and since this follows an earth-type development it is not going to be an ideal model for all planets.

The first thing to decide is what the creatures who use this form of media are going to be like. If they see into the infrared or ultra-violet spectrums then their papers may be printed in an 'ink' which they can see but normal people may not be able to.

The second thing is the law level of the planet. If it is very high then the governments may keep a strict control over what can be printed by the newspapers (or the government might even own the newspapers and use them to print government propaganda).

Scenarios based on the media can take a great many forms, and the players need not necessarily know these have anything to do with reporters. A few ideas are presented below:

1. The players are contacted by a reporter who wants them to smuggle him onto a planet. He will pay them what seems a very high price for taking him to the planet and landing at a specified spaceport. What he does not tell the players is that the planet is at war and they are smuggling him onto a disused spaceport.

2. Players could be hired by media bosses to report on events that normal reporters will not go near because of the danger involved. But don't forget the danger must be very great for reporters not to try and make a story of it!

3. The players are hired by a reporter to track down a killer who is murdering people so that he can report about the murders. The killings have no link at all and the reporter keeps one step ahead of the players. Occasionally the gamesmaster may leave the odd clue for the players, or subtly hint that the reporter always seem to get to the place of the murder too quickly. □

NIGHTMARE IN GREEN

An AD&D adventure for 4-8 4th-6th level characters, by Graeme Davis

BACKGROUND

The adventurers have been hired by the Baron of Alsaran to carry out a small armed reconnaissance in the area of the small market town of Kalsvard. The town lies at the foot of a plateau which makes up the south-western part of the province of Alsaran.

Confused reports have been coming in from Kalsvard of raiding 'green men' carrying off dead and captives. No taxes have been received from the area for almost two months, and the two state militia units, which included an element of the Baron's personal guard, have failed to report or return from the area.

History seems largely to have passed Kalsvard by: the only unusual event in the barony's chronicles is the granting of a freehold on a series of caves in the southern face of the plateau to a druid by the name of Rhaubyn ap Kiernan. The druid apparently wanted these caves for the purposes of research, and nothing has been heard from him since he took up residence. The caves themselves are about five miles to the north-east of the town.

Kalsvard is in what appears to be a state of siege. The entire population from the surrounding area is gathered into the town, around which an earth rampart is hurriedly being thrown up. All trees, grasses and vegetation of any kind near this rampart have been destroyed. All the outlying farmsteads have been abandoned, and all available supplies of food have been gathered in. As a consequence, planting has been neglected, and although there are enough supplies to feed the community for about four weeks stored in the cellars of the town hall, most of the farmers and townspeople face financial ruin owing to the disruption of normal farming and trading activities.

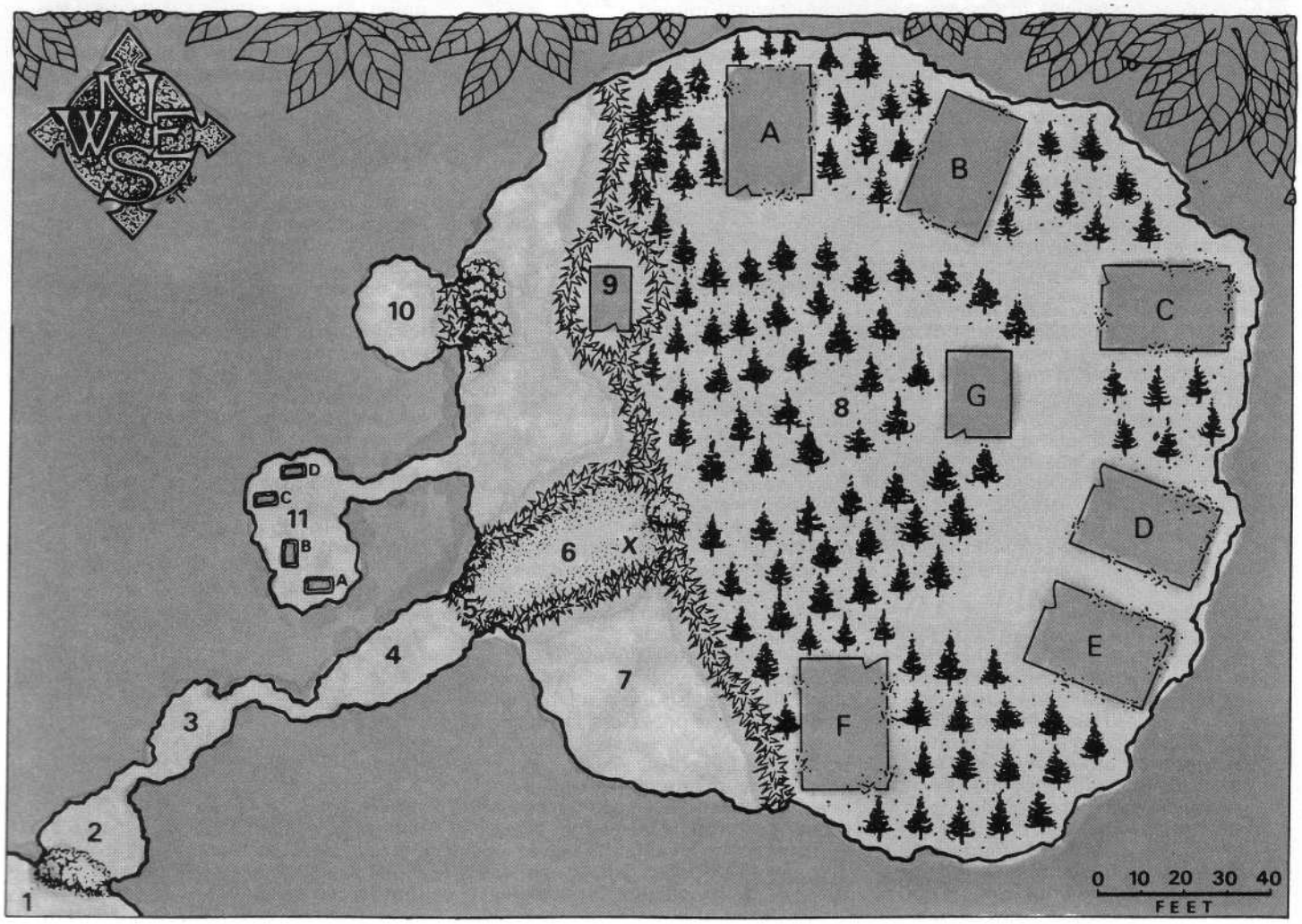
Despite the sudden influx of refugees, Kalsvard is not overly crowded; the destruction of the militia has left the place almost without able-bodied men. Panic is giving rise to outbursts of hysteria, and although the men and youths remaining in the town have thrown together an ad hoc force for maintaining order, this is largely ineffectual; an understandable fact given that the majority of them are armed with pitchforks or brooms. Some of the farmers are on the verge of insanity; after a lifetime in agriculture, having their own crops turn against them at the behest of 'green devils' is more than some can bear.

Strangers arriving in Kalsvard will be almost immediately surrounded by an hysterical mob of people, causing a situation which could very easily escalate into a riot. Any druid who comes near Kalsvard stands a very good chance of being lynched.

Els Tyrren, the mayor of Kalsvard, is a tired but strong-looking man in his middle fifties. The present situation has all but got the better of his stolid yeomanly nature, and his resources have been stretched to the limit to prevent total hysteria sweeping through the populace. He will happily place the whole of Kalsvard at the party's disposal (for what it is worth), and, as the only militia-trained man left in the town, he will be torn between offering to join the party and remaining in Kalsvard to maintain order.

DM'S INFORMATION

There was once a powerful druid by the name of Rhaubyn ap Kiernan whose knowledge and understanding of plants of all kinds was unequalled. He discovered a complex of caves in the southern side of the limestone plateau of Alsaran, and found one vast cavern whose roof had collapsed, leaving it open to the sky and creating a sheltered hothouse effect within the chamber. He cleared the caverns and established himself there, carrying out various experiments



in the crossbreeding of plants. As the years went by, his experiments became more and more dubious in nature, and when he finally mixed botany with necromancy to create the first brothers of the pine as servants, his assistant, a young druid by the name of Sylvanus, deserted him. Kiernan continued with his experiments nonetheless, creating wilder and more exotic crossbreeds until his meddling with nature finally cost him his life.

Since then, the brothers of the pine have taken over the caves as a base for extensive raiding in the surrounding area. They have also defended the caves with some of Kiernan's more aggressive crossbreeds, as well as with their own druidic powers. The posse of bold townspeople who set out to destroy the place after the first raid never returned, and on more than one occasion hired swords and local heroes have tried to clear the caves of the evil that infest them; none have been seen since.

The characters should be unaware of the fate of previous expeditions into the caves, at least when the baron hires them, and that they are not the first to be sent into the area. All this will become apparent later, once they have time to ask questions.

If there is no druid in the party, an NPC druid of appropriate level may join them, if desired, having been sent by Sylvanus (no longer an Initiate) to wipe out the evil spawned by Kiernan. Optionally, the party may be hired by this individual, rather than by the baron.

The mayor, Els Tyrren, will be able to tell the party of the fate of previous expeditions. He is also the only figure of authority left in the town after the priest of Demeter (from the one small temple) died in the first expedition to the caves.

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

A series of caves, some five miles from the town of Kalsvard, are used by a powerful druid who specialises in experimental botany. Apparently using these caves as a base, groups of 'green men' have recently taken to raiding homesteads in the area, carrying off dead and captives. Assaults on the caves by a group of local militia, and more than one group of adventurers, have failed to evict these creatures.

Information

The following information can be obtained by judicious questioning of inhabitants of Kalsvard (from 1-4 rumours may be obtained by each character making enquiries):

1. The druid ap Kiernan has summoned some fell demon lord of plants, whose servants the green men are. (False.)

2. Some locals claim to have seen friends and relatives amongst the raiding bands of green men – people assumed to have been lost after venturing into caves. (True.)

3. The green men raid in bands of about a dozen. Their war cries are terrible to hear – like the screaming of lost souls. (True.)

4. Nothing can kill the green men; they are some kind of devils. (False.)

5. The caves lead to another world where plants are the dominant species and animals do not exist; ap Kiernan has sealed the doom of the human race. (False.)

6. Those entering the caves can hear the screams of all the damned souls who died therein. (False.)

7. The entrance to the caves has disappeared – almost as if the earth itself was trying to destroy the place. (False.)

8. The green men can make the very grass and bushes attack their intended victims, binding them so that they may be carried off. (True.)

9. The green men fear nothing but fire. (True.)

10. The vegetable kingdom is trying to take over the world. (False. The rumour is most likely to be spread by a drunken farmer preaching from outside a tavern!)

11. The druid has sold his soul to some devil, who has given him the green men as servants to collect victims for horrible sacrifices. (False.)

12. The green men are under the control of some malevolent intelligence which manipulates the bodies of its victim. (False.)

THE CAVES (MAP 1)

1. The entrance to the caves is covered by an *hallucinatory forest* spell (*PH* p59), thus hiding it from casual observers.

2. Around the walls of this cave, and extending into the next one (**3**), are two lines of shriekers and violet fungi. The shriekers have been slightly modified by Kiernan to work on a chain reaction principle, setting each other off and eventually carrying the alarm to cave **5**. The violet fungi are intended to delay and weaken intruders, giving the brothers time to prepare their defences.

4 violet fungi: AC7; HD3; HP16, 18, 17, 17; MV 1"; 1d4 Att; rotting poison; xp 135 + 4/hp; [*MM* p42].

4 shriekers: AC7; HD3; HP12, 20, 13, 17; MV 1"; Att nil; noise; xp 5 + 1/hp; [*MM* p87].

3. This dark and damp cavern contains a variety of different moulds, including patches of the yellow and brown varieties. Also patrolling the cave are two gas spores, and there is a pair of shriekers at the neck of the passage into **4** (part of the alarm system).

Yellow mould (3 patches): AC9; Att 1–8; poison spores; [*MM* p71].

Brown mould (1 patch): AC9; freezing; [*MM* p71].

2 gas spores: AC9; HP1 each; MV 3"; 1 Att; infestation, explosion (6d6); xp 33 each; [*MM* p42].

2 shriekers: AC7; HD3; HP12, 14; noise; xp 17, 19; [*MM* p87].

4. The floor and lower walls of this cavern are covered with two extensive patches of witherweed, allowing only single-file movement through the cavern without disturbing the weed. Across the exit from here into the open area beyond **6** is a thorn hedge (**5**).

Witherweed (2 patches): AC8; HD4; HP25, 23; multiple attacks, dexterity drain; xp 225, 217; [*FF* p95].

5. One brother of the pine waits here on guard with two shambling mounds. The brother has two ceramic jars, each of which contains a fire-flower (see *Monsters*). As a group of intruders enters cave **4**, he will throw them against the wall directly above the patches of witherweed. Should the party come too near the thorn hedge, he will cast *entangle* on it before going to raise the alarm, leaving the shambling mounds to deal with anyone who gets through the hedge.

2 shambling mounds: AC0; HD10; HP37, 42; MV 6"; Att 2-16/2-16; suffocation, partial magic and spell immunity; xp 2170, 2220; [*MM* p87].

2 fire-flowers: AC4; HD4; HP23, 27; Att 1-8 (x4); heat, fire immunity; xp 436, 449.

6. This pathway is lined with stands of leechweed (see *Monsters*) backed by a thorn hedge. The entrance to **8** is concealed by an *hallucinatory forest*. The path is only wide enough to allow single-file passage without disturbing the leechweed, and each round, every character on the path will be attacked by 1-8 leechweed. *Snare* spells cross the entrances from **5** and **8**.

There are several hundred individual leechweed in the two stands, and it is left to the individual DM to determine hit points for any which are subjected to weapon attacks.

As the party approaches the point marked **X**, they will become subject to a special hallucination produced by the two basidirons in **7**.

The hallucination produced by the spores of the basidirons causes victims to believe that they can hear voices coming from beyond the hedge. The voices will be those of the last group of adventurers to have discovered area **7**; their conversation as they went in, followed by the sounds of battle. The hedge by point **X** is a little thinner than elsewhere and looks as if an entry has already been forced through it.

7. In this shady enclosure are two basidirons, which will attempt to lure the party in as described in **6**. In conjunction with the seven whipweed herein, they form an effective extermination force to destroy any who are lured into the trap.

2 basidirons: AC4; HD5+5; HP30, 24; MV 6"; Att 2-8; smothering, hallucinatory spores, immune to mental spells, cold resistance; xp 655, 619; [*MM2* p15].

7 whipweed: AC6/4; HD2+4/1+4; HP17/7, 13/5, 15/11, 20/3, 13/5, 17/3, 9/8; MV 3"; Att 1-10/1-10; xp 120 + 4/hp; [*FF* p94].

8. This is the main encampment area, which is partially open to the sky, and for which ap Kiernan chose the caves. It is now filled with closely-planted pine trees, each with a small bowl attached for tapping resin. Towards the walls of the area is a series of ruined buildings (**A-F**), possibly hothouses, which have

been partially repaired and are now occupied by the brothers of the pine.

The brothers are organised into three bands of twenty individuals, each under a leader, with the Jarl's hut (**G**) in the centre of the clearing. By this hut are five large barrels of pine resin and the other equipment necessary for creating a new brother. In the Jarl's hut is a chest containing 1,500cp, 10,000sp, 5,000gp, 1500gp in gems and a *Wand of Magic Detection*.

Band A (Huts A,B)
Leader: AC5; HD4; HP30. Shortsword, 3 darts, *Potion of Plant Control*. Spells: *entangle* (x2), *faerie fire* (x2), *produce flame, obscurement, call lightning, pyrotechnics*.

20 brothers: AC5; HD3; HP19, 10, 13, 21, 16, 12, 22, 8, 23, 13, 9, 15, 7, 15, 16, 21, 11, 16, 13,16. Shortsword, 2 darts. Spells: *entangle* (x16), *faerie fire* (x4).

Band B (Huts C, D)
Leader: AC5; HD4; HP25. Longsword, 4 darts, *Potion of Plant Control*. Spells: *entangle* (x4), *cause light wounds, heat metal, cause disease, cause poison*.

20 brothers: AC5; HD3; HP13, 13, 9, 18, 12, 13, 15, 15, 11, 8, 23, 12, 11, 13, 10, 12, 18, 18, 15, 12. Shortsword, 2 darts. Spells: *entangle* (x20).

Band C (Huts E, F)
Leader: AC5; HD4; HP25. Longsword, 3 darts, *Potion of Plant Control*. Spells: *entangle* (x2), *faerie fire* (x2), *produce flame, obscurement, summon insects, plant growth*.

20 brothers: AC5; HD3; HP14, 18, 13, 17, 11, 19, 8, 15, 18, 16,14,12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 13, 14, 11, 12. Shortsword, 3 darts. Spells: *entangle* (x16), *faerie fire* (x4).

Jarl: AC5; HD6; HP36; druidic abilities. +2 *Longsword*; 3 +1 *Darts*; *Scroll* of *summon insects, pass plant, feeblemind*; *Scroll* of *hold animal, pass without trace, fire trap; Ring of Fire Resistance; Potion of Plant Control; Wand of Magic Missiles* (57 charges).

Spells: *entangle* (x4), *produce flame* (x2), *heat metal, pyrotechnics* (x2), *cause serious wounds*.

One of the above units will be out raiding, and there is a 30% chance per hour that it will return to base. (The DM may elect to have this unit return at a key moment, to be encountered if the going has been too easy.)

Tactics
Once the alarm has been raised, all available units will assemble among the pines in the main area. The leaders will observe the party's progress, moving under cover through the thorn hedges (as if using the third level druidic ability), and will outline the party with *faerie fire* as they come towards **8**. At a suitable moment, half the members of one of the groups will move to cut off the party's retreat.

A combination of *pyrotechnics, entangle* and *plant growth* will be used in an attempt to immobilise the party as they enter. If this succeeds, victims will be bound and taken to the Jarl's quarters to await transformation. Intruders will be prevented at all costs from making for **10**.

The main intention is to capture the party for transformation rather than to annihilate them outright; this will only be done as a last resort.

9. The door to this building is sealed with a *fire trap* (1d4 +12 damage), and the building itself is surrounded by particularly dense thorn hedges. These were once ap Kiernan's quarters, and are now

partially ruined. His skeleton can be seen on his bed, still contorted as if in final death agony, with what appear to be antler-like growths of horn sprouting from his temples and eye-sockets. This is the dormant growth of the stagweed that killed him.

Also in the building are a mouldering table and chair, and a chest of strong, seasoned oak, again *fire trapped*. This contains two druidical ceremonial robes; a sickle with a golden blade (250gp); leather pouches containing dried and withered mistletoe and other herbs; 2 *Potions of Undead Control* (brothers of the pine); a +2 *Quarterstaff*; *Scroll* of *fire seeds* (x3), *plant growth*; and three *Potions of Plant Control*.

Stagweed: AC5; HD7; HP28; MV 0"; immune to weapons; xp 2086; [see *Monsters*].

10. The entrance to this cavern has been sealed off by the brothers of the pine with a dense thorn hedge backed by a line of kulamtu trees [see *Monsters*].

10 kulamtu trees: AC5/3; HD3; HP14, 17, 13, 19, 16, 16, 10, 12, 15, 11; MV 0"; Att 1 (x4); entanglement; xp 25 + 3/hp.

Inside the cavern is an extensive colony of yellow musk creeper, guarded by eight yellow musk zombies. The brothers have not yet managed to deal with this menace successfully, and have therefore tried to contain it. The yellow musk zombies are the few adventurers who managed to escape the brothers.

Yellow musk creeper (3 patches): AC7; HD3; HP17, 13, 15; MV 0"; 2d6 Att; entrancing dust, INT drain; xp 65 + 3/hp; [*FF* p97].

8 yellow musk zombies: AC variable; HD2; HP variable; immune to mind spells, cannot be turned; xp 28+2/hp; [*FF* p97].

1. AC1; HP31; +2 *Plate Mail*; 2-handed sword.

2. AC4; HP28; +1 *Longsword*; chain mail; shield; 5 daggers.

3. AC7; HP21; Shortbow; 6 daggers; studded leather armour.

4. AC10; HP16; dagger; quarterstaff; robes.

5. AC2; HP25; +2 *Splint Mail; mace; flail.*

6. AC8; HP25; shortbow; 7 +1 *Arrows*; sickle; staff; leather armour.

7. AC7; HP30; *Ring of Protection* +1; sickle; staff; leather armour.

8. AC7; HP17; shortsword; sling; 30 bullets; studded leather armour.

11. This small cavern has several tanks set into the stone floor, and the remains of the occasional workbench can be seen. In and around the tanks are their former occupants – the materials for an experiment which was in progress when the druid died.

Tank (**a**) is overflowing with a massive colony of grey ooze, and tank (**b**), covered by a heavy stone slab, contains a large ochre jelly (now in a dormant state due to a lack of food). It will revive one round after the slab is removed, and is extremely hungry. Tank (**c**) contains a colony of yellow mould, which has extended over the edges of the tank and partway up the adjoining wall. Tank (**d**) is covered in the same way as tank (**b**), and contains a dormant crossbreed between grey ooze and ochre jelly. This organism will revive in one round after the lid of its tank is removed.

Grey ooze: AC8; HD3+3; HP27; MV 1"; Att 2–16; corrosion; spell, heat and cold immunity; xp 335; [*MM* p49].

Ochre jelly: AC8; HD6; HP43; MV 3"; Att 3–12; amorphous form, lightning immunity; xp 408; [*MM* p75].

Yellow mould: AC9; Att 1–8; poison spores; [*MM* p71].

Oozing jelly (crossbreed): AC8; HD4+4; HP31; 1d4 Att 2–12; corrosion, lightning immunity, cold and fire resistance; xp 355.

MONSTERS

FIRE-FLOWER

No Appearing:	1-10
Armour Class:	4
Movement:	Nil
Hit Dice:	4
Treasure:	Nil
Attack:	1d4 tendrils (1d8 each)
Alignment:	Neutral
Intelligence:	Non-
Level/XP Value:	V/275 + 7/hp

Fire-flowers are cactus-like plants, typically about 8 inches tall, with one or two golden-metallic flowers and four highly mobile tendrils, the thickness of heavy cord. The plant can project these tendrils up to 10' in length to kill or bind prey. The plants produce intense heat, caused by a chemical reaction involved in their growth, and their bodies and tendrils are so hot that any combustible material touching them will smoulder and any living creature touching them will suffer 1d8 points of damage. The plants are immune from fire, but take double damage from cold-based attacks.

Fire-flowers attack with their tendrils; a successful hit means that a tendril has wound itself around its victim, who must save vs paralysis or be jerked off their feet and dragged towards the plant at 1' per round. The tendrils do 1d8 heat damage per round when wrapped around a victim, and once the victim has been dragged to the main plant, 5d10 lesser tendrils will shoot out into the body, each doing 1d4 heat damage per round, draining the body of minerals and other important compounds in the process.

Individuals killed by a fire-flower cannot be *resurrected*.

LEECHWEED

No Appearing:	10-200
Armour Class:	7 (stem), 5 (flower)
Movement:	Nil
Hit Dice:	1
Treasure:	Nil
Attack:	2, special
Alignment:	Neutral
Intelligence:	Non-
Level/XP Value:	I/7 + 1/hp

Leechwood grows in large stands in temperate and sub-tropical wooded areas. It grows to about four feet in height, with a long, flexible stem, 8-10 branches covered in furry, hooked leaves, and a single blossom about the size of a man's head, composed of pinkish, fleshy petals drawn close together.

The plant is sensitive to body-heat, and attacks by clinging with its leaves (as the first level druidic spell, *entangle*) whilst the bloom attaches itself to drain blood from the victim at a rate of 1d4 points per round. The attachment of the head causes 2hp damage.

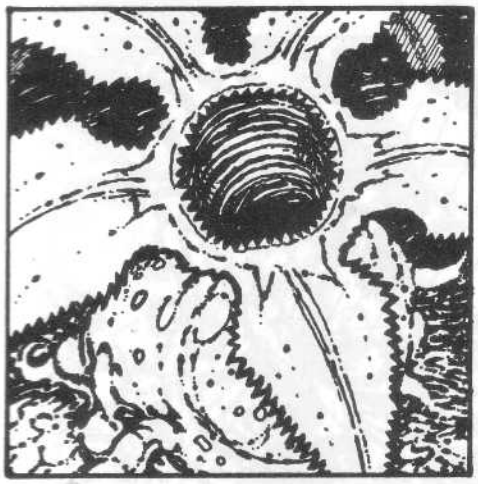
Once the plant is killed, the head will fall away, but the victim continues to lose blood at a rate of 2hp/round until the wound is staunched or a *cure light wounds* is received. If the head is severed, it will continue to suck blood (as if still attached to the plant) for a further 1d4 rounds, or until detached or killed with a hot iron.

KULAMTU TREE

No Appearing:	2-24
Armour Class:	5 (leaves, inner), 3 (trunk)
Movement:	Nil
Hit Dice:	3
Treasure:	J, K, L, M inside
Attack:	4 leaves, 1 each, special
Alignment:	Neutral
Intelligence:	Non-
Level/XP Value:	II/25 + 3/hp

Kulamtu trees normally grow in thickets in tropical rain-forests, and are about 12' tall, with four 9' long leaves arranged radially around a central mouth. The leaves are equipped with small hooks on

their surfaces, and the tree attacks with these leaves, each hit causes 1hp damage and requires a saving throw vs wands to be made. Failure indicates that one or more leaves have entangled the victim, who is now incapable of movement and will be lifted towards the mouth. Characters with STR 17+ have a chance of breaking free equal to their Bend Bars percentage. The tree takes two rounds to lift a victim to its mouth after a successful hit, and once inside the tree, digestive juices attack the victim at a rate of 4hp/ round. The internal anatomy of the tree makes climbing out impossible, but victims may attack the tree from the inside.



Once killed, the tree will cease to attack with its leaves, but the digestive juices will continue working until they are washed from the body of the victim. They may be neutralised by a *neutralise poison* spell. Inside the body of the tree may be small amount of coins and other metal which have not been dissolved; once this builds up to a certain level the tree can eject it, so that stands of kulamtu trees may be surrounded by scattered coins, swords, spearheads and other metal items.

STAGWEED

No Appearing:	1
Armour Class:	5
Movement:	Nil
Hit Dice:	7
Treasure:	Victim's possessions
Attack:	Special
Alignment:	Neutral
Intelligence:	Non-
Level/XP Value:	VII/1750 + 12/hp

Dormant stagweed are usually found only in deserted and desolate areas, in the form of strange antler-like growths erupting from the cranial sutures, eye-sockets and other skull orifices of long-dead victims. When these are disturbed, they release a cloud of spores in a 40' radius sphere, and all within the cloud of spores must save vs poison at −3. Those who fail to save become infested with the spores, which grow throughout the body, erupting shoots through the eye sockets, mouth, ears, etc, after 3-4 days. During this period the victim will suffer from severe headaches, blackouts, and possible insanity, but can be cured by use of *neutralise poison* or *remove curse*. Once the plant has started to erupt, the victim may live for a further 24 hours, but is not curable except by using a *wish*.

Control plant spells, potions, etc will check growth during their period of effect but cannot reverse growth. Once a plant has achieved full growth, about 24 hours after the beginning of the eruption phase, it will produce one bloom, which emits a *suggestion* field (as spell) of 10' radius, to entice others to approach and touch the plant, whereupon they will become infested with tendrils which inject fresh spores into their bodies. When the supply of victims has run out, the plant will become dormant again.

Stagweed is vulnerable only to fire and plant-based spells. Weapon attacks cause the plant to release a further cloud of spores in a 10' radius.

OOZING JELLY

No Appearing:	1
Armour Class:	8
Movement:	3"
Hit Dice:	4+4
Treasure:	Nil
Attack:	1-4 pseudopods (2-12 each)
Alignment:	Neutral
Intelligence:	Non-
Level/XP Value:	IV/200 + 5/hp

This crossbreed between a grey ooze and an ochre jelly appears as an ochre jelly of a slightly darker colour than normal. It can attack with 1d4 pseudopods per round, each pseudopod doing 2d6 damage. The creature can corrode wood, metal, leather and flesh, and its corrosive secretions continue to cause 1d6 points of damage per round until washed off or a *neutralise poison* spell is cast.

Weapons and lightning-based attacks divide the creature as with the ochre jelly, and cold-based attacks slow it by 50%, with a 2% chance per level of the caster turning it dormant for 1d4 turns. Fire-based attacks do half damage.

THE BROTHERS OF THE PINE
by Julian Lawrence

No Appearing:	10-200
Armour Class:	5
Movement:	12"
Hit Dice:	3
Treasure:	Individuals Q,C in lair
Attack:	By weapon
Alignment:	Lawful evil/neutral evil
Intelligence:	Average/very
Level/XP Value:	III/90 + 3/hp

The brothers of the pine are a foul form of undead created from bloodless bodies by pumping pine sap into their veins. They live in dim woodland and use their fiendish cunning to lure adventurers to their deaths so that they can drain their blood and replace it with sap, so increasing their brotherhood. This foul operation is carried out by the Jarl of the creatures who will have 6 hit dice and powers as a 6th level druid. All of them possess 1 first level druid spell (chosen at random) usable once per day. For every 20 encountered there will be a leader who will have 4 hit dice and powers as a druid of level 4.

In battle these beings emit a shrieking wail which will cause all NPCs, etc, in earshot to check morale at −20% or flee for 1d8 turns. The creatures' favourite weapons are jagged sabres and throwing darts.

They are immune to non-magical weapons and cold, take half damage from lightning, but double damage from fire. Only plant-based spells affect them. They can be turned as shadows on the clerics vs undead table.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Kulamtu trees, fire-flowers and leechweed come from the works of Robert Howard. The stagweed is taken from *The Seed in the Sepulchre* by Clark Ashton Smith. The brothers of the pine first appeared in *WD21*.□

Simon Granville, Germany: I was astounded, nay, outraged by the comments of people like Phil Masters in *WD73*. I could not believe that he was blaming us (adolescents) for the decline in the hobby market. If all adults were like Terence O'Brien and gave us a chance at 'real FRPG', I'm sure we'd show the 'adults' a thing or two. The only people responsible for the decline in the hobby market are the producers of the games, not the buyers (that is if there is a decline, because personally I haven't noticed it).

Jan Knight, Felixtowe: Older players seem to have this complex that all rolegamers under the age of 14 are unimaginative, *Fighting Fantasy*-book-playing, bendy-toy-buying plague carriers. But we do have imagination – more than Phil Masters' grey cell probably has. That Drokking spug sits and moans that we are infecting the market, and none of us can play properly, and that it is illegal to play if you are under 16. Well, Phil and all you other Drokking spugging grud-loving killjoys, we are here to stay. I started playing at 10, and am now 13, which is probably longer than the bunch of OPs (old perps) who write in to say how inferior we are at role-playing, just because we are younger (jealousy will get you nowhere!).

Jez Keen, Stockport: Phil Masters seems to think that my cheap jibe (singular) at George Stepanek is grounds to dismiss the entire arguments of all concerned, and was in fact so upset by my comment that he forgot to say *why* he doesn't think children are necessary to games companies. Mohan Holkar thinks it was better in the old days, when the only available game was *D&D* (that was the case when I started playing, anyway) and *Games Workshop* was still a twinkle in Ian Livingstone's eye. I hardly think we wish to return to that state of affairs.

It is difficult to cite particular examples of items which *are* necessary to the hobby (I would think bendy toys are not, since they were a commercial failure in addition to being ill-received amongst 'serious' gamers), but games companies need to get their funding somehow. I know many people who would agree with me in saying that *AD&D* is one of the most horrendously rulebound systems there is, yet without it *TSR* – and indeed gaming itself – would not be what it is today, if it existed at all.

Andrew Bassett, Birmingham: OK, so cheap stuff is served up to plonkers; OK, some games are useless rip-offs; OK, some kids are morons . . . but you don't *have* to buy rubbish! I admit that younger rolegamers have probably encouraged inflation, but they are not wholly responsible. If you showed us what to buy via clubs, etc, then the cheap rubbish would not get bought. People have the right to buy what they like (albeit rubbish). On the whole, apart from a few selfish spastics with more money than sense, we don't like getting ripped off! Some of us under sixteens are intelligent ROLEPLAYERS. We could (and would) be better off if people showed us the light instead of slagging us off.

Steve Cooper, Birmingham: I'm sorry to have to add my voice to the 'kiddies' debate, but Phil Masters seems to think that I and my colleagues – at the infantile and immature age of 14 – are playing with *Fighting Fantasy* and bendy dolls, and this is rather annoying. I read *Warlock of Firetop Mountain* when I was ten, and had I not done so I would never have come across role-playing. I have since ditched *D&D* as unrealistic and outdated, and I am presently busy with *RuneQuest* and *Bushido*, but I shall not be buying any games more advanced than 'churned-out solo adventures' until I am (at least) 16, when Mr Masters will accept me as being able to 'play properly'.

Simon Gardner, South Ferriby: I am a young gamer (15) and I have been playing for about 4 years. Personally, I object to being called an infant. Gamers do not automatically become capable of playing at 16; age has nothing to do with it, and it is intelligence, imagination and experience which dictate playing ability.

Tobias Hill, London: Although Mr Masters is correct in assuming that many young gamers can't play properly, he will be happy, if surprised, to learn that many of us thoroughly 'stuffed kiddies' have been playing for many years – or at least longer than he might have supposed. I myself have five years under my belt, although some of my friends have been playing for as long as eight. I am sure even big, bad Mr Stepanek will agree that 'young beginner' would be a more accurate term to apply.

Jez Keen: I can't help feeling that Phil Masters is being a teeny-weeny bit self-centred when he says 'Stuff the kiddies' and 'Leave them until they are 16 (at least)'. He is presumably proposing some kind of magic circle elite, with an entrance exam to be passed before we are allowed to take out a subscription to *White Dwarf*. Economically it would be a disaster of course, but I submit that it's also ideologically unsound:

Young Gamer: 'Please sir, I'd like to play a game with you so I can become better.'

Older Gamer: 'No chance, you've got to become better before you can play a game with me, sonny. . . .'

Young Gamer: 'Suit yourself. Naff off you unaccommodating, inconsiderate little rat.' (Retires to spend the next seven years playing dungeon bashes because he doesn't know any better.)

Dave Hughes, Wickford: I would just like to point out to Marcus Hill (*WD74*) that this is a perfect example of why players like George Stepanek object to young gamers. A 23rd level MU and a 33rd level cleric? Are you serious?!

You think wrong if you think that constitutes an 'adequate achievement'. As far as I'm concerned it just highlights the fact that young players are destroying the game (*D&D*, I presume) by giving low-level characters tons of magic and treasure, etc. Where is the joy in a 33rd level character when it has only taken three days gaming to get it up from first level?

Quite frankly I'd wish you'd stick to *Fighting Fantasy* and plastic figures, and let us get on with playing *AD&D* (if we must) how it should be played.

Twilight 2000 *is another subject that has resulted in widely differing views from readers. Entering the fray this issue is the game's designer . . .*

Frank Chadwick, Bloomington, USA: When I design a game and it is reviewed, I would like to have the review cover the game, not my personal views on nuclear winter, graduated response, mutual assured destruction, or the relative value of American versus British culture. If a reviewer finds that he absolutely must concentrate primarily on my opinions of those things, then I wish he would *ask me* what they are rather than attempt to reconstruct them from the fragmentary evidence of one role-playing game and his own distorted views of what the prevailing 'favourite American' scenario is. All Americans do not agree with the Reagan administration (unlike all British subjects, who, I have it on reliable authority, agree unanimously with the Conservative PM).

One of the more distressing parts of the entire review and subsequent exchange of letters was the noticeable anti-American theme in some of them. Marcus repeatedly uses the term 'American' in his review as if that was sufficient criticism unto itself, and Tom Conway's letter in issue *71* had a similar ring. Americans do not all wear cowboy boots and

spit (those few of use not in uniform and shooting up drugs in West Germany), and there actually is at least a little diversity of opinion over here in the colonies. In fact, I could note here that I myself do not find the 'favourite American' scenario presented in the game particularly plausible. But then, it isn't meant to be plausible. It's a *game* remember? When was the last time anyone bitched about the plausibility of *Dungeons & Dragons*?

Last Tuesday, as I recall. . .

John Outram, Camberley: Gamers must be responsible for the morality and decency of gaming products, or that responsibility will be taken from us in the form of censorship. I am not suggesting that games like *Twilight 2000, Merc*, and whatever Rambo-games are inevitably going to appear should be taken off the market, but I think that we must indicate that wargamers can take some sort of moral stance and voluntarily reject such trash.

Charles Gibbons, London: No one ever said that a reviewer should like the product he reviews, but he does have to review the product, not just the ethics of the game. If the game has a strong ethical point that must be discussed, then do so. But if the moral argument takes up more space than the game review, then it ceases to become a review and ends up as a debate. If a reviewer knows he will love or hate a game before he opens the box and sees its game system, then he's about as impartial as *GDW* reviewing *Twilight 2000*.

Simon Evans's comments about the portrayal of women in fantasy (WD73) *also drew a considerable amount of flak.*

Steve Broomfield, London: I was alarmed by the attitude displayed by Simon Evans. What on earth does this person think he's saying? It would be a sorry day indeed on which female gamers were forced to go elsewhere for their role-playing info. Perhaps Mr Evans would like to see them set up a magazine of their own, with pictures of Mel (Mad Max) Gibson and Tom (Magnum) Selleck on every other page? This is, after all, a free country, and to deny someone the right to read a magazine because of its adolescent fantasies is execrable. Okay, so like the other 13 and 14-year-old role-players you like to see pictures of 'wicked women' in your favourite rag, but you'll grow out of it. I've been playing *D&D* and its offshoots since 1977, and there has always been a fair degree of 'soft porn' implied – but it's not a necessary element. I'm not saying *WD* should stop the use of these covers, *as long as they are of artistic merit.*

Sally Hayton, Margate: Simon Evans must rank amongst the all-time great comedians. I do enjoy a bit of tongue-in-cheek humour – though it was a little dry – if it wasn't the sort of opinion only a self-opinionated, bigoted, jumped up idiot would have – you could almost have thought him serious.

I feel that as an intelligent, well-intentioned woman I should scream protest at the semi-naked females draped everywhere – but they are attractive. I only object when said ladies are in situations where more clothing or armour is clearly called for.

People like Mr Evans make me seethe; he sounds like the sort of person I took up gaming to avoid. Role-playing offers the opportunity for a bit of escapism from the racist, sexist, and ageist rubbish that confronts us every day.

Venetia Lee, Sheffield: Mr Evans appears to be a little confused on the subject of both history and fantasy . . . 'Pseudo-medieval society was male orientated', 'women were relegated to a very subservient role'. If it is 'pseudo', how come we are talking historical fact? Real medieval society did not make women quite as inferior as Simon Evans would have us believe. It is true that they were generally excluded from public life, but because they stayed at home while men were at court, on business or at war, they played an important role in the administration and organisation of their households. Moreover, fantasy medieval worlds usually differ from the real in one crucial aspect – they are without Christianity. Remove St Paul from the picture and post-Roman Empire society could have been very different; the women of the pagan Scandinavians, Celts and the Romans themselves were more emancipated than women were to be for a long time after.

Cathy Wright, Glasgow: What's all the fuss about female stereotyping in fantasy? It's true that the illustrations can be over-developed to the point of incredulity, but as for RPGs, have you ever played with a female player? They terrify me! The stresses and strains of ladylike living can be released in role-playing games, producing psychopathic elves and bloodthirsty nuns who make *Thrud the Barbarian* look like Frodo Baggins. Not that they're dumb or unsubtle; women, I find, are more inclined to look before they leap, and let chivalrous types stroll into traps ahead of them. So they're always 'deceitful whores' or 'helpless innocents', are they? Then you must have a sexist GM. You don't have to conform to such idiotic stereotypes any more than a man who has to behave like a witless barbarian. Try getting more women among your players, a move which most male rolegamers would heartily applaud.

Jon Almond, Chelmsford: Judging by his letter in *WD73*, Simon Evans has obviously been reading different fantasy to everyone else. His claim that 'stereotypical subservient females are as much a part of fantasy as magic and hobbit-bashing' must be based on the mass of pulp fantasy novels, and not the quality work produced by prominent authors like Jack Vance and Tolkien.

It is widely agreed that these writers were masters of fantasy. Search their books for examples of stereotyped subservient females and you'll be in for a difficult job. The point is that most major fantasy works do not have weak/panicky female stereotypes; in fact, on many occasions the strength of mind of a female character is vital to the plot.

Matthew Carrington, High Wycombe: Am I the only person who reads this tome of dubious morality who dislikes Superhero rolegames? If so, can you suggest a painless method of suicide?

As far as I can see, this genre of games totally contradicts everything I believe constitutes a good role-playing game. The most important aspect of a good game is the element of fear and suspense. The very name destroys this – it conjures up images of Batman, and such intelligent dialogue as 'Oof' and 'Pow!' The character, by definition, is better than any of his contemporaries, so even if he can be killed (an unlikely occurrence in my experience) it is overlooked by the player, so holds no fear. Because of high attributes, no skill is needed – why use guile and cunning when brute force is quicker, and often more effective?

How many Superheroes can claim to be despots of whole continents, or even have the chance to become such? There is very little chance of advancement commensurate with the risks taken, partly because the structure of the game is not geared to take account of player skill and power politics play, and partly because there are no risks to be taken.

To conclude: there are no risks, and even if there were they could not be taken seriously, and the characters are too powerful for player skill and guile to take any place in the game.

Need I direct you to How to Save the Universe *in this issue? – Dynamic Ed.*

Bryn Pears, East Doncaster, Australia: Why do you persist in wasting three whole pages of valuable space on such pathetic cartoon strips? Way back in 1978 (*WD8* to be exact) *Kalgar* was dropped on the contention that *WD* was 'not really the place for a cartoon strip'. Now you have three! And really, *Kalgar* outclassed all three current offerings. Wouldn't it be better to remove at least one of the strips (preferably *The Travellers* or *Thrud*) and increase the size of the letters page?

We do try and be flexible as far as the cartoon strips go, even to the extent of replacing them with adverts. . . .

Tony Allen, Oriflamme Publishing: Could it be that your reviewer (Dave Langford, *WD72*) did not read *Sceptre Mortal*? I ask this since all his comments are drawn from the blurb, the chapter headings, and one or two key words easily obtained from a quick flick through.

Could it also be that he just doesn't like 'High Fantasy'? Maybe some of us like J R R Tolkien *not* because he has a 'vein of homeliness', but because he writes high fantasy. Maybe some of us don't read fantasy books because we want page after page of wry humour and clever witticisms. Possibly we even like fantasy for what it is. We might even resent Langford's arrogant dismissal of the sort of writing that some of us actually like.

So go sneer at *Dungeons & Dragons*, Langford – that also fits all your prejudices. Oh, and *White Dwarf* – get a reviewer who reads books properly.

No thanks, we already have one – Ed.

THE HEART OF THE DARK

An illuminatingly different Call of Cthulhu scenario, by Andy Bradbury

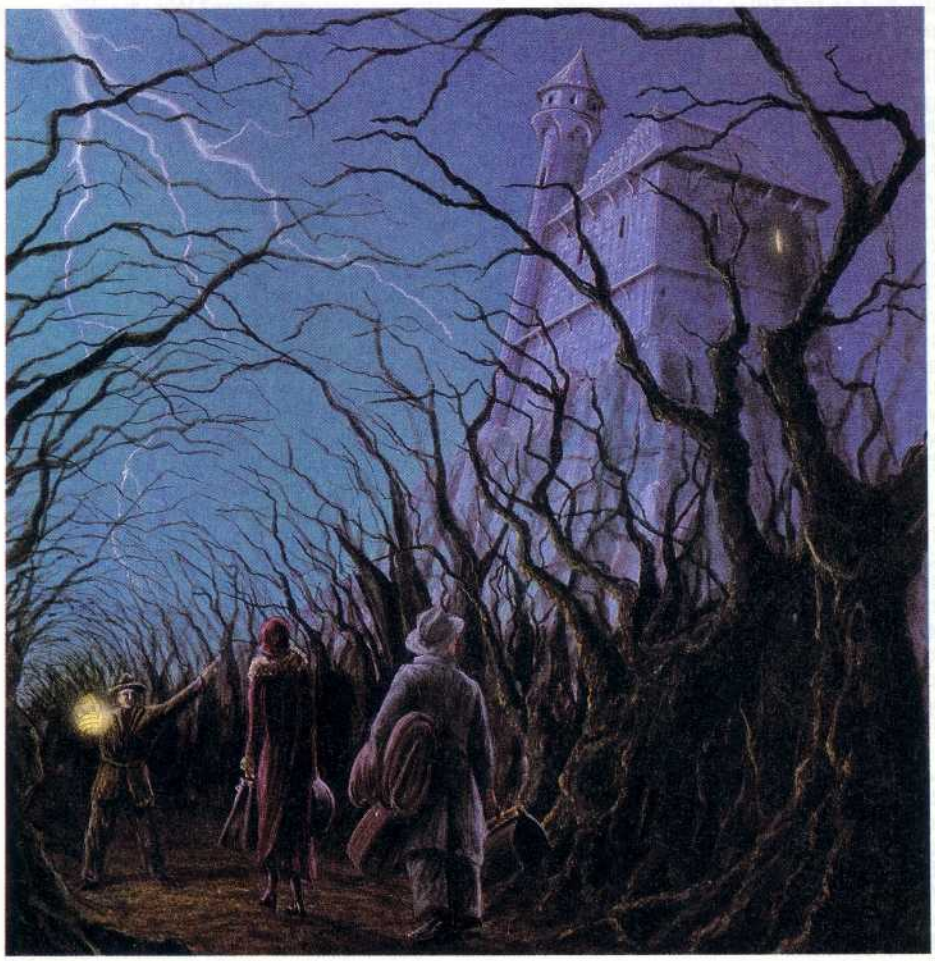
KEEPER'S INTRODUCTION

This scenario is deliberately designed as a 'time out' adventure; in fact it could be described as school of red herrings looking for someone to hoodwink. However, for those keepers who feel that genuine danger is indispensible for a really interesting adventure, the alternative plotlines provided can be used to beef up the action. No statistics for NPCs are provided since it is doubtful that they will be needed. . . .

It will be advantageous if the investigators have at least some knowledge of 'conspiracy theory' groups such as the Freemasons and the Ancient Illuminated Seers of Bavaria (see *WD73*). It will also help if you can (subtly) induce at least one of your players to (re-)read Lovecraft's story *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* before sending the group off on this excursion. Assuming that you are, yourself, at least passingly familiar with this tale, the reason for this last instruction will become increasingly clear. (If you haven't read it – *shame on you!*)

PART 1: MURDER IN WHITECHAPEL

For reasons which will become clear in a mo-ment, the investigators should have a positive relationship with a member of the London Metropolitan CID (preferably an Inspector or more senior officer). This would best be achieved in a previous adventure so the lead into this scenario appears as genuine as possible. It is through this officer that the investigators will learn of a murder in London's East End. To the officer the murder means very little; it is in the details which he lets drop that the investigators should spot a suggestion of Cthulhoid influences at work.



The murder, as described (at second hand) by Inspector X runs as follows:

'Two nights ago (April 16th-17th, 192–), at about twelve forty-five, Police Constable Arthur Gribben (PC 56H – the H stands for Whitechapel Division) was patrolling his normal beat in the area of Commercial Street when he heard a shout from an alleyway followed by sounds of a scuffle. Being a bit raw, and possibly rather over-impressed by the associations of this area (ie the Ripper Murders of 1888) Gribben took the precaution of giving a blast on his police whistle before venturing into the alleyway.

'On reaching the scene of the crime Gribben says he heard footsteps receding into the distance; whether of one person or several he couldn't tell. Gribben was about to give chase, no other constable having arrived as yet, when he spotted a body huddled against one wall of the alley.

'The body proved to be that of an elderly man, between 65 and 75 years old according to the coroner, evidently well down on his luck. Death, despite two or three quite brutal blows to the old man's head, was not instantaneous. Not that that helps us very much. According to Gribben's report the man was only able to breath one short phrase, and that in some foreign language, before he finally gave up the ghost.

'I've a copy of the words in my notebook, but we've yet to find a language expert who can make any sense of them.'

Keepers should note that the *exact* location of the scene of the murder is, in fact, entirely irrelevant. For a little added realism you might like to use the area of Spitalfields (London) bounded by Commercial Street, Hanbury Street, Fashion Street and Brick Lane.

If questioned further the Inspector will reveal the following information:

1. A copy of the victim's last words, as recorded by PC Gribben:

'Odd frog if gebel – he yogs froth in garning . . .'

2. A list of the contents of the dead man's pockets:

Twelve five-pound notes, a sovereign plus 15/- in small change, a small glass bottle containing a quantity of greyish crystals (so far unidentified), a section of a page from a recent copy of *The Times* showing arrival/departure dates for

transatlantic liners.

3. A copy of the maker's label from the dead man's jacket: F Benks & Son, Arkham, Mass.

Keeper's Notes

With regard to the first item, the words are an extremely poor rendition of a part of the formula: 'Ogthrod ai'f geb'l – *Yog-Sothoth* 'ngah'ng ai'y *Zhro!*' (featured in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*). If the investigators have been properly primed then they too should make this connection. If they don't then the keeper may give them whatever help is necessary, through a non-player character, to make sure that they understand the significance and the original source of this phrase.

The Inspector also has a few observations on this evidence:

1. He is somewhat confused by the amount of money the dead man was carrying (the equivalent of about three months' wages for a clerk or school teacher), which doesn't go with the shabby clothes and down-at-heel shoes.

2. The motive for the attack is totally unclear. The Inspector's personal opinion is that the assailant(s) were after the money but were frightened off by the sound of PC Gribben's whistle before they could find it.

3. The bottle of grey crystals is another mystery from the Inspector's point of view. The substance has been submitted to all the normal tests by the forensic scientists at New Scotland Yard – with absolutely no results whatsoever. (It is hoped that the investigators will eventually associate the grey crystals with the 'essential salts' used by re-animators, a line of thought which the keeper should quietly encourage.)

4. Finally, the officers of the CID are working on the assumption that the dead man was an American (because of the label in the jacket). They have written to the Arkham police enclosing a photograph of the dead man and are waiting for a reply. In the meantime they have no clues whatever to the man's identity, his address in London (if any) or what he was doing before he was killed.

If asked, the inspector will arrange to supply the investigators with a similar photograph. Such a photograph would have been taken after the body was cleaned up and with the eyes open. If not inspected too closely it will pass for a photograph taken whilst the man was alive.

This is the limit of the Inspector's usefulness to the investigators. No amount of further questioning of the Inspector will produce any worthwhile information. There is one clue, however, still to be found. If any investigator makes a successful Idea roll whilst reading the account of the murder, or whilst visiting the scene of the murder then they will recall the infamous 'writing on the wall' incident during the investigation of the Jack the Ripper murders. The idea can be presented in the following manner:

'As you come to the part of the report about Gribben's memories of the Ripper case/as you stare at the fading stain that marks the spot where the old man's life blood drained away, you are reminded of those terrible murders that occurred in 1888, and how baffled the police were because of the apparent lack of clues.

'All they had was a letter, possibly written by a crank, and the mysterious message written in chalk

The Juwes are
The men That
Will not
be Blamed
for nothing

'Why was it, you wonder, that Sir Charles Warren was so eager to have that message removed? Did the word 'Juwes' really indicate that the Freemasons were somehow involved in the murders? Or was it just a spelling error, as the bad grammar in the rest of the message seems to suggest? And is there anything in the present case that the police are trying to hide for some reason of their own?'

As indicated above, the ideas of hidden information and a conspiracy of some kind are key elements in the plot. At this point in the adventure, however, it is only necessary to sow the seeds of suspicion in the investigators' minds.

Since the trail in London has now come to a dead-end, the investigators will presumably follow the lead that points to Arkham. If they choose to wait for the reply expected from Arkham police then they should be told that it offers no useful information, but the keeper may offer the broad hint that the answer came back too quickly for the American police to have made any detailed enquiries.

PART 2: THE EYE OF THE PYRAMID

Since transatlantic flights are still a thing of the future (unless one of the investigators is Charles Lindbergh!) the party will need to travel first to New York by ocean liner. (Note: the keeper may extend the adventure by using the episode entitled *The Mauretania* in *Chaosium's The Asylum & Other Tales.*

Having reached New York the investigators will have to decide whether to travel by rail or whether to buy an automobile (companies like *Hertz* and *Avis*, etc, are also things of the future).

Both methods of travel are relatively slow, but whilst the train journey will only take one day to complete (including a change of trains at Boston), the same journey by road will take nearer three days (including overnight stops).

Regardless of which means of transport the investigators adopt, the sea journey will involve one important event during which the baggage of one or more of the investigators will be rifled. The keeper may present this in any way he chooses – as a search or as attempted theft. The true purpose of the event is to give the investigators the idea that they are being followed from England by some person, or persons, unknown. The only limitation on the keeper's actions is the requirement that the photograph of the old man *must* be left untouched. This is easily achieved if only *some* of the baggage is tampered with – so the keeper will need to keep a temporary note of which player has the photograph in their possession.

By introducing this incident into the *Mauretania* scenario you will, of course, heap confusion upon confusion, especially since that story also includes references to Jack the Ripper. This raises no problems so far as the *Heart of the Dark* storyline is concerned since confusion is very much 'the name of the game'. At the same time the keeper should be careful not to let things get too far out of hand, and the investigators may be grateful for a quick reminder of 'the story so far' (ie up until the time when they left London) when they dock in New York.

On reaching Arkham the investigators will have three obvious ports of call: the establishment of F Benks & Son, the police station, and the library of the Miskatonic University.

1. F Benks & Son

This is an up-market 'men's haberdashery' store on Parsonage Street (*CoC* p77). The investigators will get no help from any of the assistants, who will refer them to Mr Benks. The amount of information they get from Mr Benks will depend on one of two things: if at least one of the investigators has a genuine upper class accent (or better yet, a title – Benks is a terrible snob!), or if any of the investigators can make a successful Debate roll then Benks will give the details below. If the investigators cannot meet either of these requirements then Benks will say that he has already spoken to the police and show them the door.

In actual fact Mr Benks has very little to say that will be of any use in this enquiry. His father (the F Benks part of F Benks & Son) has died some three years previously, and Mr Benks jnr has always worked in the office rather than on the shop floor. Not surprisingly, then, he doesn't recognise the man in the photograph, and since the jacket itself is still in England even if he is given an accurate description he will only be able to say that it sounds like a made-to-measure item in a type of cloth no longer used, since the company that supplied it went out of business more than five years ago.

2. The Police.

The local police will be courteous, and totally useless. As far as they are concerned the murder sounds like nothing more than 'a heist that turned sour when the constable showed up'. It is quite clear that the police chief has done little but compare the photograph with his missing persons' files and 'mug shots' – and has no intention of taking the matter further unless he has something much more positive to go on.

3. The Miskatonic University Library

This source will provide the only genuine lead for the investigators, and even this will depend on the action they take. If any of the younger librarians are questioned they will have no information and will not recognise the man in the photograph. There is one elderly librarian (who should deliberately introduce himself to the investigators, if necessary) who will vaguely remember having dealings with someone who could have been a younger version of the dead man. The gist of his informa-

tion will be follows:
'I do believe that this man, or someone very like him, used to come into the library quite often over a period of about six months. It's rather strange though, because the person I'm thinking of was quite a bit younger than this fellow – between 30 to 35 I would guess, though I'm only going back about ten years. Also the man I knew, though to be strictly accurate I didn't know him at all, of course, except by sight, was much more smartly dressed than this fellow would seem to be.

'If my memory serves correctly the man I knew was only interested in two books held by the library – *De Vermiis Mysteriis*, that's in Latin you know, and von Junzt's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, which is the original German version of course. I must also assume that he was quite well educated for I never saw him refer to any of the foreign language dictionaries.

'Now that I think about it I do seem to remember that my initial impression of the man was that he must be a new member of the faculty, especially as he always seemed to be carrying several books of his own whenever I saw him actually going in or out of the library. But he wasn't, because in this job one always gets to know the real faculty members within a very short time of their arrival, of course. I suppose he must have been a Curwen Streeter.'

Assuming the characters ask what a 'Curwen Streeter', he will continue:

'How very thoughtless of me, you're not familiar with our little whims and fancies, of course. Here at the library we're always being asked for all kinds of books, by students, the members of the faculty and by members of the public – who are free to use the non-restricted sections of the library during normal opening times. With such a large selection of people to cater for it is inevitable that we get requests for books that we simply do not have, either because they are not relevant to the subjects covered at the university, or because they are not regarded as being authoritative texts in a given area.

'Whenever we get such enquiries we usually refer that person to Curwen Street, which has a whole host of second-hand and antiquarian bookshops. Thus we've acquired the habit, almost a tradition, you might say, of calling any non-university visitor who brings his or her own books into the library a Curwen Streeter.'

Curwen Street, as the librarian explained, is indeed well supplied with bookshops of various sizes and quality – about a dozen in all. The keeper may make the process of visiting the shops as long or short as he likes, but sooner or later the investigators will discover the Pyramid Bookshop, on the corner of an alleyway between Brown Street and Jenkin Street.

THE PYRAMID BOOKSHOP AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE KNOT

From the outside the Pyramid Bookshop looks almost deserted. The external paint-work, of a muddy green colour, is peeling away in chunks. The windows, though neither cracked nor broken, are covered by a thick layer of grime on both sides of the glass. But then the owners of the bookshop really aren't interested in attracting customers!

The Pyramid Bookshop is, in truth, the Arkham 'front' for an extremely dangerous secret society which bears the enigmatic title: The Brotherhood of the Knot. This society is ruled by the totally anonymous, and totally feared 'Five Brothers'. The primary purpose of the bookshop is to serve as a 'postbox' for members of the Order. Members of the rank and file swap news and information, and orders are handed out and reports gathered in by the 'Brothers'.

The only person who will always be present in the bookshop is a wizened old man employed to give the shop an air of authenticity. He is, in fact, very close to being insane, and certainly his loyalty to the Brotherhood is totally fanatical (despite the fact that he has never been allowed to officially join the cult).

When the investigators enter the shop there is a 5% chance that one, or at most two, members of the cult are present: they will make a suspiciously hasty exit when they see the investigators do not belong to the cult.

The investigators should be encouraged to enter the Pyramid Bookshop in a group if it is at all possible. This should not present any difficulties as long as the keeper has emphasised the fact that they only have the one photograph. Should anyone have the idea of obtaining duplicates (a process requiring several hours work by someone experienced in photographic work and having all the necessary materials in their possession), the keeper is justified in concealing the existence of this establishment until the investigators have visited *all* of the other bookshops and meet up again to discuss the results of their enquiries. If necessary the Pyramid Bookshop may be moved to a different location to make this possible.

When the investigators enter the bookshop, regardless of whether anyone else is present, the elderly assistant – seated on a high stool behind the counter – will bury his nose in a dog-eared copy of a Rand MacNally & Co atlas. He will make no attempt to communicate with the investigators in any way unless they open the conversation first. The shop itself *appears* to consist of nothing but row upon row of sagging bookcases, plus numerous odd stacks of books piled to head height and more. There is a layer of dust over most of the stock which is, in any case, almost entirely made up of a jumble of titles that look as though they have thrown onto the shelves in the same order that they came through the door.

If the investigators decide to take a look around the shop before questioning the assistant they can take as long as they like but will find nothing of interest as far as the books are concerned. However, anyone making a successful Spot Hidden roll will notice that the floor between the door and the counter is comparatively dust free, though it doesn't appear to have been properly swept. An additional successful Idea roll will bring the observation that people must come into the shop quite regularly yet never bother to look around the bookshelves!

When approached by the investigators the old man will place the atlas on the counter – face down – before speaking to them. A Spot Hidden roll, with half normal chance of success, will reveal that the old man was studying a map of Central Europe. No matter how the investigators approach the 'assistant' he will pretend to be deaf, or stupid, or both. If shown the photograph, however, he will assume a startled expression (obviously he does recognise the dead man) but then recover himself and mumble something about consulting his records to refresh his memory.

Once a pathway has been cleared the old man will go the desk and rummage through the papers, shaking his head from time to time. This process is quite long enough for any of the investigators to go back to the counter and examine the atlas. (If no one thinks of doing this the keeper could have the atlas fall to the floor. If allowed to open 'by itself' it will always open at the map of Roumania and Bulgaria.)

By consulting the atlas the investigators will find that it is open at the map of Roumania and Bulgaria. The map is unmarked except for a black ring around the town of Szasz Udvarhely on the western flank of the Carpathian Mountains. If you have a copy of *The Fungi from Yuggoth*, the map in question is on page 21. Szasz Udvarhely (given as Sz Udvarhely) is just below the 'i' in Transylvania. On modern maps the name has been changed to Sighsoara and the town is situated on the main railway line between Budapest and Bucharest.

PART 3: DINNER WITH THE COUNT

Once the party has assembled in Szasz Udvarhely they will be ready to move on to the next part of the adventure.

The next destination for the investigators is to be the Castle Vasilio, home of Count Vasilio, an extremely wealthy but rather eccentric product of centuries of inbreeding amongst the Transylvanian nobility.

The existence of Castle Vasilio, which stands above the little village of Kokelberg at the head of the river Kokel, about 35 miles north-east of Szasz Udvarhely (by road), will be brought to the investigators' notice by means of a newspaper report:

'The Commandant of the Szasz Udvarhely police has today admitted

The old man will go right to the back of the shop and clear a path between several large stacks of books to reveal an alcove lined with bookshelves and apparently containing nothing but an open rolltop desk littered with papers and a rather dim light or lamp just out of sight.

The keeper should now *appear* to make a Spot Hidden roll on behalf of the investigators. Regardless of the outcome the keeper reveals that the investigators have noticed that all the books seem to come from the same publisher – indicated by the symbol of an eye on top of a pyramid on the spine of each book (the light is too dim for anyone to be able to read any of the titles of these books).

that the recent attack upon a member of the Kokelberg town council was, in fact, only the latest in a series of similar attacks in that region which have occurred over a period of nearly 18 months.

'Moreover, it has come to the notice of this newspaper that the attacks in question are of as particularly loathsome nature involving mutilations to the victims' bodies of a kind too horrible to be described in print. Suffice it to say that several persons who have seen the bodies have openly made reference to the practices of the infamous Count Vlad 'the Impaler' who terrorised the inhabitants of Carpathia in days of yore.'

This report is the talk of the town on the day that it is published. If the investigators cannot obtain an explanation of the business on their own account then it may be read out to the party by the landlord of the inn or hotel where the group is staying with comments on the odd practices of 'backward peasants', and the laxness of the police for allowing such things to happen 'in a civilised country'. [If any of the investigators already understands Roumanian then they may read the report for themselves. In this case they will already know that 'Vlad the Impaler', allegedly the prototype for Bram Stoker's Count Dracula, was in the habit of drinking his victims' blood in the hope of gaining immortality.]

The investigators' next step, then, will be to make their way to Kokelberg in order to find out what lies behind the series of brutal attacks. Since the roads in this part of the country are little more than cart tracks they have three options: to go on horseback, to hire a coach or cart, or to obtain a car (the landlord of the hotel should be able to suggest where they can obtain their means of transport in all three cases). The keeper should allow the investigators to have a safe journey to Kokelberg no matter what form of transport they choose.

On reaching Kokelberg the investigators will find themselves in a fairly typical small, middle-European village. It consists of some fifteen to twenty buildings (the haphazard architecture makes it difficult to tell where one building ends and the next one starts), including a few shops (baker, butcher, grocer, etc), the policeman's house and two inns. The villagers are a surly bunch who will avoid the outsiders if they can. If the investigators do manage to corner anyone to question them (the landlord/serving girl in one of the inns, for example) that person will give totally useless answers, pretending not to understand what the questioner is getting at. This will still apply even if some members of speak Roumanian like a native, or if the group has been smart enough to hire a guide/interpreter in Szasz Udvarhely.

The investigators may choose to consult the local policeman straight away. Even if they don't he will find them about an hour after they reach the village, and the results will be the same in both cases. The policeman, like most of the middle-European *politzei* of this period, is thoroughly corruptible and disliked by the rest of the community. In return for a suitable bribe he will give the party a full description of the various murders, including the important information that each victim has deep wounds about the neck and shoulders, and had been drained of all blood. He can offer no sensible explanation for these crimes since he secretly shares the villagers' belief that the spirit of Vlad the Impaler has risen from the grave.

If the investigators don't offer a bribe, or if they offer too little, then the policeman may take offence and lock them up in the single, rat-infested cell behind his house until either they offer more money or, after a suitable period of time has elapsed, Count Vasilio's servant arrives and arranges for their release.

Being a small village it won't take long for the news of the outsiders to spread throughout the entire community. Count Vasilio, however, will not learn of their arrival until the evening, when two or three of his servants come down to the village for a drink at one of the inns. In this case the Count will not be able to have the investigators brought to the castle before 9-10 o'clock at night. (This will only apply, of course, if the investigators don't make their way to the castle – about three miles east of the village – under their own steam.) Regardless of how the investigators arrive at the castle the Count will not be available until sunset, though his butler may well invite the party to wait in the main hall until that time if they visit the castle during the day.

COUNT VASILIO

Count Vasilio has the dubious distinction of being both a red herring and a crucial NPC in this scenario. (He alone has the information which will take the investigators on to the last stage of the adventure.)

Amongst the Count's eccentricities is a hatred of mirrors, actually due to the fact that when he was a child his governess always made him face a mirror when she was beating him so that he could see the blows coming! He also has two physical characteristics which are, under the circumstances, highly misleading.

In the first place he suffers from an unusual form of albinism (ie he is part albino) whereby his hair is a normal colour (in this case black) but his skin is very pale and his eyes are tinged with red. This redness is caused by the lack of coloured pupils, so that the blood vessels at the back of the eyes are partly visible and he is extremely sensitive to bright light. Rather than simply wear dark glasses, however, the Count has chosen to take up a life-style which involves going to bed at dawn and waking up as the sun sets.

The second odd characteristic is the Count's *slightly* enlarged canine teeth. They are really only noticeable when the Count grins, which he does quite a lot being a fairly happy sort of chap, and anyone making a successful Diagnose Disease roll will be able to tell that they aren't abnormally developed. (To diagnose the albinism, a player needs to make their Diagnose Disease with only half the normal chance of success.)

As you will already have realised by now, poor Count Vasilio is being set up as a vampire. And just to make the picture a little more confusing we must mention the Count's two main hobbies – chemistry and local folklore/secret societies.

In regard to the chemistry, the Count is presently working on an experiment involving the extraction of radium from pitchblende. This work is carried out in the Count's private laboratory in the cellars of the castle – where he frequently sleeps if he has been working all night. When the investigators first meet Vasilio, then, he will emerge from the cellar holding a glass bottle containing a quantity of impure radium – greyish particles! Whether the investigators ever discover what is really in the bottle will depend on their own actions. For the time being the keeper should only give a superficial description of the bottle and its contents – just enough to remind them of the bottle carried by the murdered man back in London.

Because of his opthalmic condition Count Vasilio seldom leaves the castle, only occasionally making short business/social visits which allow him to return to the castle before daybreak. This, plus his natural curiosity, is the reason why the Count has had the investigators brought to the castle (or why he gives them a warm welcome if they arrive of their own accord). Once the party is in the castle the Count will do everything necessary to make them comfortable and will invite them to make the castle their home for as long as they are in the area.

Of course the investigators may have a different interpretation of the Count's innocent actions, especially when they visit his library and find that he, too, has a number of books bearing the mark of the pyramid and the eye.

Another character who will add to the confusion at this point is the Count's butler. This man, who is about six feet four in his socks, has all the earmarks of a walking corpse. Nor is his eerie appearance helped in any way by the fact that the only sound he makes is the slight rustle of his antiquated black suit.

The butler's name is Maximilian Rosolov. During the Russian Revolution he was butler to a noble Russian family (distant relations of Count Vasilio) who backed the wrong side – ie the White Russians – and who were hacked to death by a peasant mob. Rosolov, who tried to defend the family, was sentenced to have his tongue cut out, after which he was imprisoned for many months during which time he nearly starved to death. Eventually he was freed, but was exiled from the Motherland for life. Fortunately for him he ran into another member of the family and was directed to Count Vasilio with a letter of recommendation (including an account of his loyalty). Since arriving in Roumania, then, he has worked for the Count, to whom he is equally loyal.

Of course none of the investigators will have access to this information unless given it by the Count himself and the keeper should take care to make both the Count and his unfortunate servant appear as sinister as possible in the first instance.

With this information in mind let us return to the scenario.

Once the players have been introduced to the Count they will be invited to

join him for a meal (even if they arrive quite late at night – and they are unlikely to arrive before late afternoon even if the journey is fairly uneventful).

Despite providing the group with a well-cooked and almost lavish meal, the Count will take no food himself – he will simply sit at the end of the table and chat whilst they eat. Once the meal is over he will excuse himself, saying only that he has business to attend to. At this point the investigators will be free to explore their surroundings, though the butler has his own ideas about the wisdom of allowing them too much of a free hand.

Any normal band of investigators will want to make the Count's library one of their first ports of call. At this point they will spot the 'pyramid and eye' books, but as soon as they move to inspect them more closely the butler will re-appear and try to stop them. (Because of his background he suspects all strangers of being Communist spies out to harm the Count.) This will leave the investigators with two choices: (a) try to fight it out with the butler, or (b) try to pacify him.

If they elect to fight, then the butler will fight like a man possessed, the Count will re-appear with more of his servants, the investigators will be overpowered and some may even be killed. For those that survive this will be the end of the scenario as the Count will hand them over to the village policeman (who will naturally steal anything they possess worth stealing). After a couple of days they will be taken down to Szasz Udvarhely, tried, and unless someone in the group can figure out how to get a message through to the embassy in Bukarest they will enjoy a long and unpleasant holiday in the local prison.

A more canny group of investigators should have realised by now that nothing can be taken at face value. If they try to reason with Rosolov – who won't actually attack anyone unless he thinks they are about to attack him (or the Count) – then the Count will still reappear, but this time he will be on his own and he will order Rosolov back to his own quarters. He will then ask the investigators what happened and this will open the way for a serious discussion of all that has gone before.

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Thus far the players will have been operating almost entirely in the dark. As a reward for getting this far they certainly deserve to be given some idea of where all these clues are leading. In the course of their discussion with Count Vasilio the investigators will learn the following facts:

When the Count was a young man, mainly because of an undocumented belief that his family has distant connections with the infamous Vlad the Impaler, he became interested in all aspects of local folklore. Since his condition made it almost impossible for him to roam around the countryside collecting stories at first hand, most of his information has been gathered from old books and documents.

Being a rather wealthy young man (his parents died prematurely in a boating accident at Monte Carlo) Vasilio soon gained a reputation with dealers in this kind of material throughout the region as being a customer worth cultivating. Indeed, one dealer, finding himself short of money and short of the kind of material that the Count usually purchased, took a chance and delivered to the castle a piece of a letter allegedly written by Adam Weishaupt to a fellow member of the Ancient Illuminated Seers of Bavaria. As to whether the document is genuine the Count has no way of telling, but it caught his imagination and before long he almost abandoned his folklore studies in favour of an investigation into secret societies in general, and the Illuminati in particular.

Despite his physical limitations the Count has become something of an expert on this subject and has a number of rare and arcane documents in his library including, of course, the books bearing the symbol of the pyramid and the eye. These books are alleged to be part of a limited edition of the Illuminati's basic set of texts containing all kinds of weird and often incomprehensible material relating to such topics as the wisdom of the priests of ancient Egypt, the Thibetan *Book of the Dead*, the Order of Assassins, the Knights Templar, etc, etc.

In this discussion the keeper will, of course, be taking the part of Count Vasilio. Given the complexity of the scenario so far, and the fact that there is still a final climax to be dealt with the keeper is justified in making the discussion as brief as possible by simply paraphrasing the explanation given above. There is, however, one further piece of knowledge which *must* be passed on to the investigators.

Throughout the course of his investigations one of the Count's primary interests has been the relevance of secret societies of the past to modern events. This has lead him to do a great deal of 'reading between the lines', especially in documents from the fairly recent past. It is his belief that there is a power struggle going on between several groups scattered across America and Europe (including Russia), all of whom regard themselves as the only rightful successors to Adam Weishaupt's organisation.

Vasilio further believes that one group in particular, which he knows as the Brotherhood of the Knot, is slowly gaining ascendancy over their rivals, mainly because of their absolute dedication to the methods of the legendary Assassins, namely if it gets in your way, kill it! He further believes that the Brotherhood has the largest network of agents, stretching from America to Transylvania and possibly even into Russia, all controlled by a ruling council known as the Five Brothers, who have their headquarters in Bavaria itself.

The Count will also explain the significance of the Brotherhood's symbol – the eye and the pyramid. The pyramid is a simple reference to the Egyptian mystery religions in general. By combining it with an eye, however, the pyramid gains a very special meaning. According to Ludvig Prinn, in book *De Vermiis Mysteriis*, Nyarlathotep is known as 'the all seeing eye' – because his primary allegiance is to Azathoth, the 'blind idiot' ruler of the outer gods.

PART 4: THE FIVE BROTHERS

The investigators should now be ready to embark upon the final stage of this adventure – a little 'trip' to Bavaria. Of course they may be a little reluctant to rush straight off to Germany without having a more specific location to aim for. Either way the party should be encouraged to make the city of Munich their first port of call, and to travel there by train. If the investigators need persuasion on this point then the keeper should remind them that Munich is the capital city of Bavaria. The keeper may also inform the investigators, through an item in the local newspapers or by means of a NPC (a German tourist, for example), that there has been a spate of murders in the Munich area which the local police seem unable, or unwilling to solve.

At some time during the journey to Munich the keeper will need to introduce another NPC, someone who has been in a position to overhear the investigators conversation for a few minutes. This NPC (a fellow passenger, attendant, ticket collector or whoever) will claim to have heard the investigators mention 'the eye and the pyramid', and on this basis he will ask them (with a knowing wink) if they are making for Schloss [ie castle] Benesberg.

Schloss Benesberg is, of course, the investigators' intended destination, the Bavarian headquarters of the Five Brothers. It will only be found on local maps of the region between Munich and Augsberg (which is about 30 miles west of Munich). On a large scale map look for the mountain lake (the 'Amer See') on the western branch of the River Isar. The Schloss stands in complete isolation amidst the woods at the southern end of this lake. It can be reached by car, though the poor state of the road once it enters the mountains, plus the fact that it runs alongside the lake – in full view of the Schloss – means that the investigators will need to travel on foot over the last ten miles or so if they are to escape detection.

Since Schloss Benesberg is the Brothers' HQ it is, of course, carefully guarded over an area of one square mile (ie half a mile in all directions). The guards are all handpicked members of a semi-secret organisation known as the Thule Gesellschaft. They all carry either a Luger P08 or modified Mauser C/96, and are equipped with shoulder stocks, which they use with at least 70% accuracy at any range up to 500 yards, dropping to 45% at 750 yards.

Gun note: The P08 and C/96 both use 9mm ammunition from 'box magazines' – which allow for very quick reloading. The PO8 has 8 cartridges per magazine, the C/96 has 10. The shoulder stocks are detachable (in the case of the C/96 the stock is also the holster), but in this scenario it should be assumed that all of the guards have the stock fitted to the pistol butt and can therefore use their guns like rifles – for greater accuracy.

Both types of gun only need to be cocked once, after which they will automatically re-cock themselves after each shot until the magazine is empty. The one advantage to the investigators is that, whilst the stock is in place, neither gun can be held like a normal pis-

tol – they must be raised so that the stock is supported before firing. Thus even a frontal attack on a guard stands a slim chance of success if the guard can be surprised.

Each guard has his own area to patrol, but no guard will ever be more than 300 yards from at least one of his colleagues.

Because of the remoteness of the Schloss the guards very seldom have to deal with intruders, and this has made them somewhat careless. Any player making a normal Track roll will easily work out the movement pattern of a particular guard. Even without planning the investigators have only a 5% chance of being spotted before they realise that the guards exist, and they will only require a normal Sneak roll to get close to the Schloss without being detected.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

And so, at last, the adventure reaches its climax, or rather climaxes: I have allowed for three possible endings. It is up to the keeper to judge which is the most appropriate given the physical and mental state of the party when they get to this point.

For all three endings the first stage of the climax is the same – the entrance to the Schloss itself is open and unguarded so that they can gain access to the courtyard and the front part of the building without being detected.

The occupants/owners of Schloss Benesberg are, in fact, the leaders of the Thule Gesselschaft – also known as the Five Brothers of the Brotherhood of the Knot. These men have organised what appears to be an occult society, though their actual intention is to seize power first in Germany and then in America, followed by the rest of the world. It is indeed this group which has been orgainising the murders throughout Bavaria – mainly to get rid of potential rivals – and the society as a whole already includes several politicians, high-ranking policemen, etc. These 'outer members' do not know the Brothers true ambitions and believe them to be patriotic Germans who are carrying out the 'executions' only in order to protect the Weimar Republic from a Russian-style Communist revolution.

If the investigators choose to go to the police for assistance against the Brothers they will certainly be arrested. There is also an 80% chance that the arresting officers will inform someone from the Thule Gesselschaft, in which case the investigators will certainly be either 'shot whilst resisting arrest' or released in order that they can be gunned down by a Thulist execution squad.

Ending 1

In this ending the Thule Gesselschaft is only a gang of political thugs seeking to set up their own fascist government – the occult element of the society is totally phony.

However, whilst the investigators are only facing a 'physical' problem they still have to deal with the fact that they are totally surrounded by their enemies.

Once the investigators are inside the Schloss they may protect themselves from outside interference by raising the drawbridge, though this will make enough noise to warn everyone in the area (both inside and outside the Schloss) that something is up. Even so, they will still have to cope with the internal squad of guards, plus some of the brothers. Their wisest course of action is to try to search the Schloss for evidence of the Thulists' true purpose and take it to the appropriate authorities in either Britain or America. This may not bring them any direct reward, but they will at least have 'friends in high places' if they get into trouble in future adventures.

If the investigators try to fight their way through this ending with guns blazing then the keeper may feel free to bring in so many guards that the party is eventually wiped out.

Ending 2

In the second version of the ending the political ambitions of the Brothers are really a disguise for their genuinely occult activities. In this case the final confrontation should be between the investigators and the five Thulists with a *minimum* of interference from any guards.

The occult power of the Thulists is left to the keeper to decide. However, the Brothers may well be dabbling with the occult rather than being fully-fledged practitioners of the black arts.

The purpose of this option is to allow the investigators to use tactics and cunning rather than sheer brute strength in seeking to defeat the Thulists. The keeper is urged, therefore, to give the party at least a 50-50 chance of overcoming the Brothers without having to resort to gunplay.

Ending 3

In the third ending the investigators actually get to meet Nyarlathotep in person – at a price!

Once again the party should be allowed to meet the Brothers with a minimum of interference from the guards, and when they are discovered the Brothers must all be in the same room. In this instance the investigators should be given a description of the five men as soon as they enter the appropriate room in the Schloss, though the keeper should be careful to mention the fact that one of the men has a slightly Arabian appearance without placing undue emphasis on this fact.

This Arab is, of course, Nyarlathotep himself in human form (*CoC* Chapter V). To ensure their success the investigators will need to recognise Nyarlathotep as quickly as possible and, preferably, shoot him down on the spot. This will cause the metamorphosis described in the rulebook, and the resulting loss of SAN (ie 1d100, or 1d10 if a successful SAN roll is made).

Whilst this might not sound like much of a success it will have the effect of sending all four of the human Brothers totally and irreversibly insane, thus bringing the activities of the Thule Gesselschaft to a complete halt for the time being. Long enough, for example, for the surviving investigators to make their escape and carry a warning to the authorities as described in **Ending 1**. In this case the party will also have time to make a thorough search of the Schloss (the Brothers' insanity will be a form of catatonia – complete paralysis). This search should reveal suitable items of interest (manuscripts, etc.) along with a fairly substantial amount of money in various currencies which the Brothers use to pay their agents.

But what happens if the investigators *don't* spot Nyarlathotep in his human disguise?

It should be remembered that Nyarlathotep prefers to drive his victims hopelessly insane rather than simply killing them. On this basis he will lead the human Brothers in seeming to be as cooperative as possible when the investigators break in. If any guards appear Nyarlathotep will command them to leave again, without molesting the intruders. He will also explain every aspect of the Brothers' operations, both their public activities and their true intentions, with the apparent intention of recruiting the investigators to 'the cause'.

What the investigators will not realise is that Nyarlathotep is actually building up the power for a series of powerful hallucinations. After about 20-30 minutes of conversation, then, the investigators will suddenly begin to experience several rapid and extreme changes of temperature. Within a minute or so of the start of these changes all of the investigators will find that they have been struck dumb, and that everything around them seems to be moving in slow motion.

As a climax to Nyarlathotep's attack each member of the party will 'see' the spider god Atlach-Nacha materialise in mid-air above Nyarlathotep. At the same time they will believe that every other member of the party is being overwhelmed by hordes of earthly spiders, some harmless, some poisonous. The 'harmless' spiders will be seen to encase each victim with their webs – from the feet upwards – whilst the poisonous spiders continuously bite at every piece of exposed skin.

Throughout this illusion (ie until every member of the party has been reduced to babbling insantiy) Nyarlathotep and his followers will sit calmly to one side, laughing and chatting as though watching a rather amusing cabaret routine.

Once the hallucinations have done their work the investigators will be taken away from the Schloss and dropped in the woods to fend for themselves. Assuming that the wolves don't get them first the best that any of the survivors can hope for is lifetime incarceration in a back-country mental asylum.

EPILOGUE

Though our story has now ended you may still be wondering about the old man who was murdered in London.

I must confess that this was the one part of the plot were everything was exactly as it seemed. The old man was indeed an American member of the Brotherhood, and the grey crystals really were the 'essential salts' of someone the old man hoped to re-animate. Finally, the American police were absolutely correct in assuming that the old man had been attacked simply in order to rob him – he had made the (fatal) error of letting the banknotes be seen when paying for a drink in a nearby pub shortly before the assault took place. □

Treasure Chest *is a regular department for readers' ideas about the* AD&D *game.*

LOCAL BOY MAKES GOOD

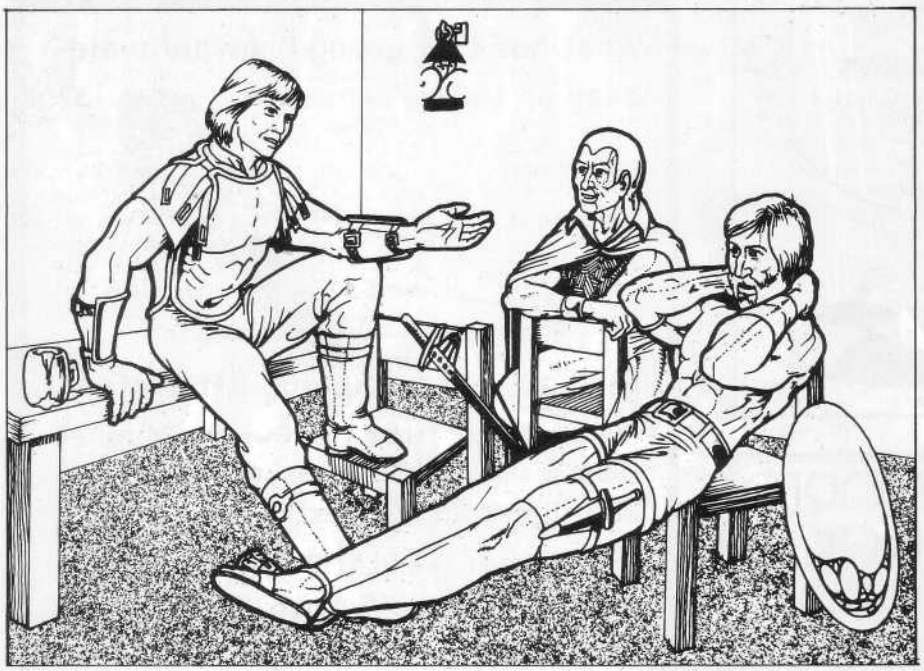
Character Background in AD&D, by Chris Felton

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons is a role-playing game. A good, solid statement, but unfortunately it fails many times in practice, the characters becoming mere cardboard cut-outs. How often has someone come up with a character and said 'It's a fighter'? How often have you heard characters who've been played for months referred to as 'the ranger'? Now consider how often you've heard a character introduced to a campaign as something like: 'Gillana Trusco, daughter of Captain Harald Trusco of the Palace Guard of the City of Hatton, which was recently sacked by Thauriis. I'm a military tactician by training, but in the seige of Hatton I picked up a good deal of street-fighting experience.'

This is a good concise history for a character being transferred from one campaign to another. No mention of the fact that she's a fourth level assassin who has been a (*charmed*) assistant to a lich for six months (ever since her last adventure went disastrously wrong). Her history gives her a background and a personality which cover many of the facts I wanted to incorporate into the character (she is one of my characters). She is a good military tactician (no, that's not a way to get the DM to give her hints, I'm also trained in the subject and had to make this knowledge plausible for the character to have), so she must have grown up in a military environment. Why didn't she become a straight fighter? Well, she was fast and intelligent, so she was trained as a spy by the local secret police, who also just happened to be the local Assassins' Guild. These sort of contacts mean that her father was no ordinary soldier, hence the commission in the palace guard.

Compare this with the average character you've ever met. A good example happened recently in my own campaign: a fourteenth level wizard was marrying a twelfth level high priest. She said 'Oh, I've got a new surname now, haven't I? What is it?' He replied 'Ah, err. . . . ' Although both had been run up from first level over the last four years, and have fully developed personalities, the High Priest Acanthus realised that he didn't even have a surname!

Players of the *Daredevils* game are remarkably fortunate in comparison. Characters have 4-40 years experience in various professions before the game starts. Debts and incomes are picked up along the way, and when a character enters the game, the player has plenty of guidelines to his background and character. Lieutenant Harold Lee, a handy character sheet informs me, was a street kid who joined the Navy to get away when he owed the local hard-men more than he could pay. At the end of his term of service he was discharged in Africa, and got a job with a safari team. Accumulating enough money to get home and pay off his debts, he turned to crime, but finally submitted to the wanderlust bug and returned to Africa to become an explorer, and, after a few years, a player character. Lt Lee's character already has a guideline to his character which any *AD&D* player would love to have for their latest fighter.



In contrast, *AD&D* offers a secondary skills table which allows characters to have a small amount of knowledge in up to four skills, which are not necessarily related; a character can become a hunter, hook and line fisherman, mason and carpenter simultaneously. Gary Gygax has offered a social status table (*UA* p82-83) which tells us that 20% of characters are illegitimate and belong to families which have an average of 4.75 children with an almost flat probability distribution. Many other games have as little to help the players with their characters' backgrounds, and this article provides a universal method for deciding a character's background.

Since a character starts at birth, they need to know where they stand in the family – this is decided in *Table 1*. Roll once for each column. There is a 1% chance (00 on d100) that the character has a twin; if so, there is a 1 in 6 (1 on d6) chance that he is a triplet. 3% (98-00 on d100) of all characters are illegitimate.

Table 1: Birth Order Table

Roll (d100)	Elder Siblings	Younger Siblings
01-35	0	0
36-62	1	1
63-79	2	2
80-88	3	3
89-94	4	4
95-97	5	5
98-99	6	6
00	Roll again, adding 6	

Example: Kaskin the fighter needs a background. The roll on the first column is 24 – no elder siblings; the roll on the second is 72 – two younger. A third roll shows that he is not a twin, but he is illegitimate, according to a fourth roll.

Father's Social Status

The *Social Class Table* in *Unearthed Arcana* (p82) is a good one to use here, but only for player characters. The balance of classes is totally wrong for ordinary NPCs, but about right for those who choose to go out adventuring to improve their station in life. *Table 2* gives a suitable distribution for NPCs.

Table 2: NPC Social Class Table

Roll (d100)	Social Class
01-04	Lower Lower Class
05-10	Middle Lower Class
11-20	Upper Lower Class
21-35	Lower Middle Class
36-55	Middle Middle Class
56-87	Upper Middle Class
88-96	Lower Upper Class
97-99	Middle Upper Class
00	Upper Upper Class

Note: In some cases this will be the mother's social status, if the mother is the breadwinner of the family. The spouse is the same social level as the breadwinner, unless they married beneath their station, in which case the spouse is one class below their former social level. If the character is illegitimate, both the mother's and the father's social status should be rolled.

Example: Kaskin's mother is Lower Lower Class (the dice are not kind today), his father Middle Middle Class. The player must construct a story to fit the facts:

She was a serving wench in a rundown tavern when a group of young rowdies came round slumming. One of them charmed her into a night of passion, from which Kaskin resulted. She never saw the father again.

Had the situation been reversed, she may have been a merchant's wife, bored by hubby's absence, and he the gardener. If they'd been about the same

class, then perhaps they were young lovers, forbidden to marry because Kaskin's grandfather wanted someone better for his son. . . .

However, fate has decided that Kaskin is a bastard (although the player decides that his mother eventually married, thus making his two half-sisters legitimate), and he drops his surname when he leaves home.

Father's Profession

Through simply being around the place of his father's work, a child will pick up the rudiments of the profession. Although he wouldn't learn enough to earn a living at the profession before entering his chosen apprenticeship, a character will be able to converse knowledgeably about the subject, perform simple tasks associated with it, and so on. The profession of the character's father depends on his class – roll on *Table 3*.

Table 3: Profession Type (d100)

Father's Class			Profession
Lower	Middle	Upper	Type
01-55	01-17	01-05	Manual
56-89	18-61	06-35	Semi-skilled
90-95	62-95	36-55	Skilled
96-00	84-00	56-00	Executive

Manual professions are those which involve a good deal of physical activity – not just labourers and animal handlers, but foresters, hunters, house servants and so. Semi-skilled professions are those for which skills are important – craftsmen in manufacturing professions, along with scribes and entertainers (actors, dancers, etc). Skilled professions are not necessarily more skilled than semi-skilled, but they are associated with more expensive materials. Executive skills are those which rely upon a lot of brainpower and charisma.

A father's social status reflects his position within his profession. A Lower Lower Class person may, by a lucky roll, find himself listed as a magistrate, normally something associated with the higher classes. Obviously he doesn't sit on a bench (which would change his status considerably), so he must have a job which fits. Maybe he was a legal advisor (Upper Lower Class) who bungled advice to an influential client, and no one will hire him any more except for a few lower class people who need legal advice but can't afford it elsewhere. The 'magistrate' roll would actually cover several professions: LLC – Failure, MLC – Legal Assistant, ULC – Legal Advisor; LMC – Solicitor, MMC – Lawyer, UMC – Barrister; LUC – Judge, MUC – Chief Justice, UUC – Lord Chancellor.

Similarly, a Middle Upper Class father who happens to roll labourer as a profession will in fact be something like a middling noble – only a baron, maybe – who is rich and influential because he controls much of the country's labour force through his investments.

Table 4: Profession Tables

4A: Manual Professions (d100)

01-02	Animal Handler	43-58	Labourer
03-16	Cook	59-69	Military
17-40	Farmer	70-74	Miner
41	Forester	75-79	Sailor
42	Hunter	80-00	Service

4B: Semi-Skilled Professions (d100)

01-03	Armourer	65-70	Miller
04-05	Bowyer	71-74	Non-ferrous-metalworker
06-12	Brewer		
13-25	Carpenter	75	Painter
26-28	Coachwright	76-79	Potter
29-32	Cooper	80-82	Scribe
33-38	Entertainer	83-87	Shipwright
39-41	Fletcher	88-93	Tailor
42-49	Ironworker	94-96	Tavernkeeper
50-58	Leatherworker	97-98	Thief
59	Locksmith	99-00	Weaver
60-64	Mason		

4C: Skilled Professions (d100)

01-04	Alchemist	53-68	Lapidary
05-20	Gambler	69-70	Perfumer
21-28	Glassblower	71-82	Silversmith
29-38	Goldsmith	83-00	Trader
39-52	Jeweller		

4D: Executive Professions (d100)

01	Architect	68-70	Medical
02-36	Bureaucrat	71-78	Magistrate
37-62	Idler	79-82	Moneylender
63-67	Magician	83-00	Priest

Example: Kaskin's mother is a serving wench in a tavern, but before Kaskin is very old, she marries someone from her own class: a semi-skilled worker, specifically a carpenter. His social status puts him at the bottom of this profession. In this case, the player decides, he works sawing logs into planks at a large sawmill. 'His' brat wouldn't be allowed to get underfoot, so Kaskin spent most of his childhood with his mother. Since another pot-scrubber is always welcome in a tavern, Kaskin's mother could keep an eye on him at work, so he grew up around inns. If his mother hadn't been working, he would have started the game with, to quote from the Great Tome, 'no skill of measurable worth'.

All these professions include a large number of others. For example, Service conjures up visions of *Upstairs, Downstairs* and maids with frilly white aprons. In fact it covers just about every personal service: barbers, hairdressers, undertakers, masseuses. . . . If you're stuck for inspiration, try section 716 in *Roget's Thesaurus*!

Each profession has its own skills, and in most cases the player character will have picked up the basics. There are exceptions – a lower class character's brat would not be welcome in most workplaces of the semi-skilled or better professions, such as Kaskin (above). Some of these skills will give advantages in the game – for example, a locksmith's son will have a 20% chance of picking a lock or finding and removing small mechanical traps, or +15% to those abilities if he is a thief. In such cases, DMs should penalise the competitive gamer by putting less opportunities their way for the abilities that they have 'acquired'. (A competitive player in this sense is the sort of player who must have the best character, and who will always have the characters who are sons of locksmiths, senior military men (+4 charisma when dealing with troops), traders (good understanding of market values), and so on. They can also be recognised by the string of 18s on their character sheet, the dice rolls behind their hands, etc. These players never produce characters, only experience points gathering machines.)

Example: Kaskin grew up around taverns. Apart from ensuring that he can always get a job as a barman or bouncer, he's probably built up quite a resistance to alcohol and picked up a bit of skill at brawling and gambling.

Now you know what a character's parents did, it's time to work out why he didn't do the same. Why is he becoming a vagrant soldier of fortune instead of following daddy's fine example? How did he get his training, some of which (especially a magic-user apprenticeship) can be time-consuming and expensive. Once he was qualified, why did he leave the comfortable ladder of progression through the ranks of his craft, choosing instead the hard, dangerous life of an adventurer? There are, however, no tables to cover this – your imagination is on its own.

Example: Kaskin had grown into a promising lad, so the owner of the tavern where he worked put him into the militia – 'so's you can learn 'ow to 'handle yerself agin the likes o' them mercenaries you couldn't chuck out last week'. With a sword in his hand, and a run of luck on the dice to give him the money for armour, Kaskin decided it was time to prove his mother right – he is as good as his real father, and can win his own surname, and be rich. . . .

Notice that I've deviated from the tables in the examples. Kaskin's mother is working in a tavern because that was the first explanation for his illegitimacy that came to mind. If I was stuck for inspiration, then I would have rolled for her profession and the father's, and tried to work out how they got together; in this case, it wasn't necessary. Gillana is a different case entirely – her background was constructed completely without tables because it was the type of character I wanted. Don't let yourself be tied to these tables – they are guidelines to get your imagination working. As long as your DM agrees to the character you want, you should devise the character you want to run.

Example: Kaskin (no surname; one day he'll be a lord, and Kaskin will become the surname of his dynasty) is a first level fighter. Determined to become at least middle class to prove that he's as good as his real father, he won't be distracted by wine, women and song (although he'll indulge heavily in all three, but he's learned how to handle them). He is a social climber, and will continually try to wrangle his way into polite company, where (at first) he doesn't know how to behave. Wealth is important to him as a sign of class, but he won't hesitate to spend it to acquire status, and he will be prone to dashing off on noble and heroic quests which are totally foreign to his tough, street-wise upbringing, so while doing them he is slightly embarrassed about his motives for being there. All that from eight dice rolls and a bit of thought!

'Good evening. I'm Kaskin. I hear you're looking for an adventurous warrior.' □

Tabletop Heroes *is a regular column covering painting and modelling hints, written by Joe Dever.*

OILS

Part One: Preparation

It would be true to say that only a minority of miniature figure painters use oils whilst the majority prefer to stick with more 'user-friendly' enamel and acrylic paints. In doing so, however, this latter group are missing out on a tremendously versatile medium that can, when mastered, produce a richness and variey of colour that surpasses all others. Oils are by no means an easy medium to use; they are slow drying, not particularly economical, and often vary in texture and finish (although it is possible to control their drying time and finish to a marked degree). If you are currently using paints that come in tins or pots rather than tubes, consider how often you carry out colour mixing in order to get particular mid-tones and highlights. When using oils this mixing becomes second nature, for the blending of pigments gives a distinctive quality to miniatures that cannot be achieved with any other type of paint.

Buying Oils

Oils are sold in tubes of varying size and come in two standards: Artist's Oil Colours and Student's Oil Colours. The former are better prepared, the pigments are more finely ground, and they tend to be more consistent in colour from batch to batch. They are, however, dearer than Student's colours. When buying your initial selection of oil paints always go for the smallest tubes, as the minute amounts of paint you'll be using rules out the need for quantity. The following list contains the recommended colours that should be purchased to make up your basic selection. *List 1* covers the minimum requirements, and *List 2* shows additional colours which can be bought later to widen your scope.

List 1	List 2
Titanium White	Cobalt Blue
Ivory Black	Windsor Violet
Scarlet Lake	Vermilion
Dk Cadmium Red	Chrome Yellow
Cadmium Yellow	
Yellow Ochre	
Burnt Umber	
Burnt Sienna	
Prussian Blue	
Ultramarine	

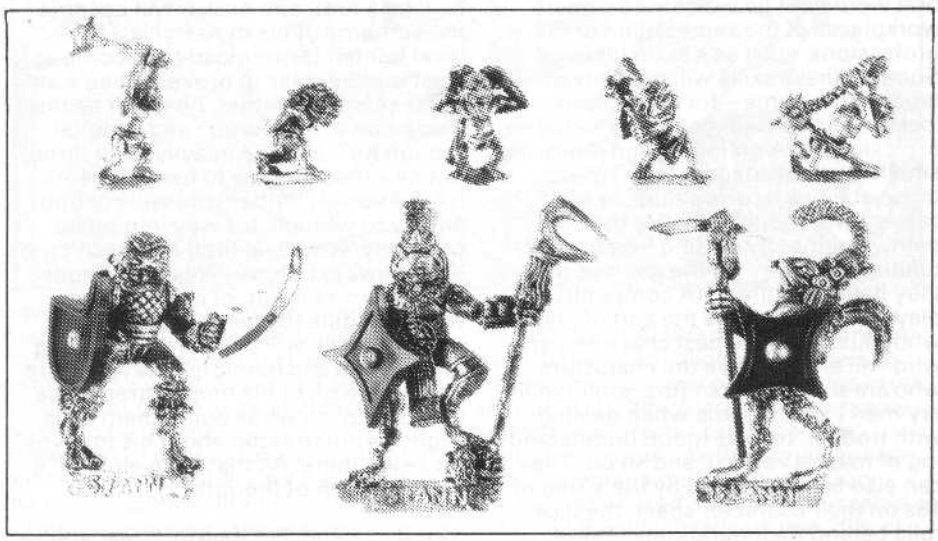
Certain colours, notably green and orange, are easily obtained by mixing other colours (blue and yellow yields green; red and yellow yields orange), and as mixing is fundamental to painting with oils, it is unnecessary to purchase these colours.

Mediums

A medium is a liquid additive that helps the paint to flow. Some oil paints flow freely, but others, particularly Burnt Umber and Burnt Sienna, are notoriously difficult to use straight from the tube. Oil paint consists of pigments bound in linseed oil, which is also the most commonly-used medium. However, its slow drying time and glossy finish make it far from ideal for use with miniatures. Alternatively, there is *Liquin*, a golden-coloured medium manufactured by *Windsor & Newton*, that is based on an alkyd resin which speeds up drying time and dries to a deep satin finish that is ideal for leather and horses. Or, try Opal Medium, a whitish-looking liquid which dries as quickly as *Liquin* but gives a matt finish. The cheapest of them all is turpentine, although strictly speaking it is not a medium but a thinning agent. This may sound a bit like splitting hairs but there is an important difference between a thinner and a medium. Small amounts of thinner work well to help oils flow, but if you overdo it two unwanted effects will occur: the oil pigments break down and become patchy, and the finish becomes very matt, which will ruin certain finishes (leather, etc) and spoil some colours, notably black, brown and reds.

Accessories

Expensive palettes, palette knives and china dishes are tempting but unnecessary extras, and any urge to purchase them when you visit your local art shop to buy your basic selection of oils should be strongly resisted. Personally, I use a couple of old white kitchen tiles to hold and mix my oil paints, but there are many other inexpensive alternatives. White saucers, plates, white formica or melamine off-cuts, or even a square of glass placed on a white card are quite suitable. In addition, you'll need some cocktail sticks for mixing your colours and two screw-top jars: one for your turpentine and the other for your brush-wash (white spirit). Armed with a selection of brushes (which I assume you already own) and the above items, you are now fully prepared to tackle the application of oils, a subject which I shall be covering in depth in next month's *TTH*.



Latest releases from Citadel include snotlings and slann.

THIS MONTH'S PHOTOGRAPHS

Three recent additions to *Citadel's* bestselling *C35* range (*Chaos Warriors*: 3 for £1.95) are shown here in *Fig 1*, the centre figure sporting a neat half-moon war banner. All three were painted, based and converted by Fraser Gray.

Fronting the *C23* range of *Ogres* is the maniacal Chaos Ogre (£1.95) featured in *Fig 2*, designed by ace lead-whittler Jez Goodwin and painted by Simon Werrett. *Citadel* wish to point out that any physical similarity between the figure and its designer is purely co-incidental.

Making his debut at the *Games Day '85* painting competition was Nazram 'boogie' Gorbag, seen here in *Fig 3*; a novel conversion that won a commendation for its owner/painter Mark Page. A *Citadel C15* orc provided the basic head and torso to which the arms, guitar, headband and sneaker-clad feet were added. This year, due to a veritable explosion of regional *Dragonmeets*, there are more chances than ever before to take part in painting competitions. Categories cover all classes; junior and senior, beginners through to experts, so why not have a go? For dates, times and entry details, contact your nearest branch of *Games Workshop*.

Fig 4 features a heavyweight Gorgon (*ADD75*: £1.95) from *Citadel's* ever-expanding range of official *AD&D* miniatures. The impressive metallic finish was obtained by carefully dry-brushing brass enamel (*Humbrol* MC18) over a black undercoat, a process that took its painter, Phil Lewis, less than ten minutes to complete!

Figs 5 and *7* show, respectively, Stone and Fire elementals from *Citadel's C34* Elementals/Demons range (£1.95 each). Both figures were painted by Tim Olsen.

The cleric seen in *Fig 6*, is one of a trio of holy adventurers that come in *Citadel's AD&D* player character pack *ADD3*. Since their introduction last autumn, the packs have proved a great success with role-players who wish to represent their characters at novice, intermediate and advanced levels of development. The figure shown is a high-level cleric, painted and based by Phil Lewis.

Miscredits

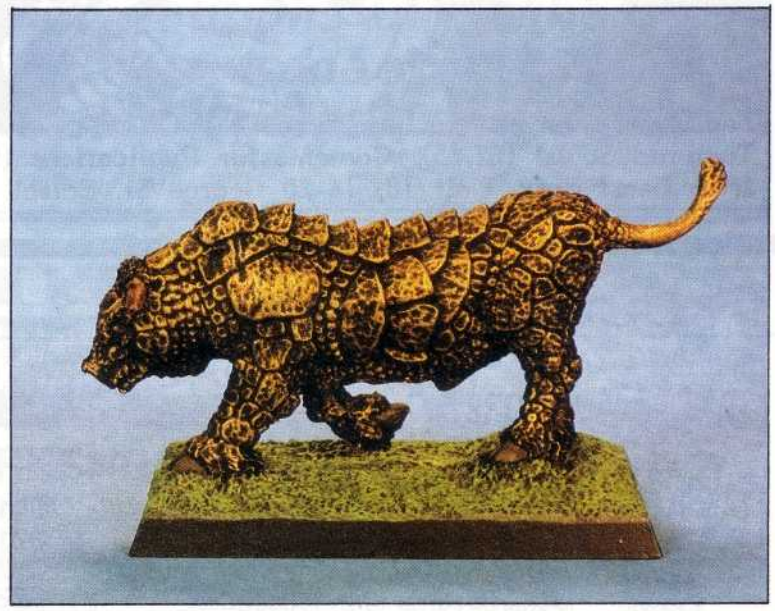
WD70 TTH: *Fig 4* was converted and painted by Adrian Bay.
WD72 TTH: *Fig 5* was painted by Tim Olsen. Sincere apologies to those concerned for any inconvenience caused by these mistakes. □

Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig 3

Fig 4



Photos: 1,2,3,5 & 7 by Joe Dever
Photos: 4 & 6 by Phil Lewis

Fig 5

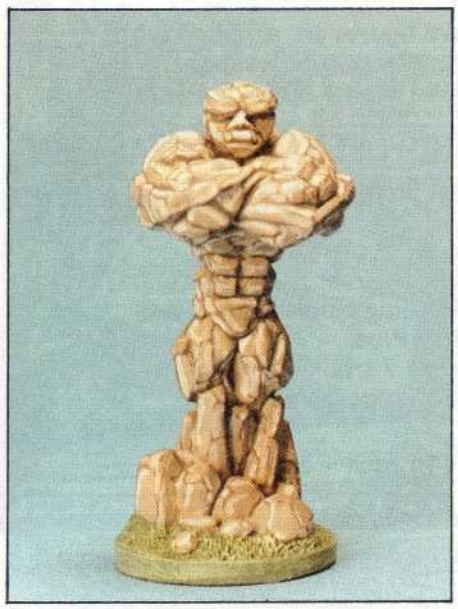


Fig 6

Fig 7

gobbledigook.
DWARVES
ROPE
GOOK
ROCK
OOPE
Niik
Tricks and traps abound in Dungeons, But who puts them there? Who or what are they for? Gook knows!
WUNDA WOT DIS IZ?
TUGG
CRUMP!
HA! THOUGHT WE'D GET A GOBLIN!
YURP!
GURGLURGLUR
NOW GOBLIN... GIZ YER GOLD!
YURP!
BU..BU.. INT GOT NUW!
ARE YOU SURE?
YAURRSS!
TWIST!
...after much nose-pain.
C'MON, LET'S GO AND FIND SOMETHING TO KILL THEN!
YURP!
OOORG
Gook plans revenge!
GRRRZNR.... TWO CAN PLAY AT THAT GRZM GAME!
Sure enough...
THERE MUST BE SOME GOLD DOWN HERE!
YURP!
YUK YUK YUK
But unseen by Gook...
YIKE!
YURP!
KREEKOUK
The trap is sprung!
KROMP!
TUG!
YOU AGAIN!
undeterred by failure...& pain...
GROOOOOOOAN
Gook hatches new, and much bigger schemes..
MMM..... DIS'LL DO!
GRZMRZNRZM DWARVES
HAMA HAMA HAMA
YAR HAR! FINISHED!
CLUNK!
Gook finds his antagonists.
YUBLUOUBLOBLUOO!
IT'S THAT GOBLIN! GET 'IM!
YURP!
The Dwarves Pursue Gook.
SLAM
HE'S GETTIN' AWAY! QUICK!
YURP!
HE'S BEHIND HERE...CAREFUL, IT MAY BE A TRAP!
YURP!
ZOOT! GOOD JOB WE WERE CAREFUL!
YURP!
smugly, they leave..
HUH. TAKES MORE THAN A GOBLIN TO OUTSMART A.....
FLIK
POOM
BiL

Trevors Tidbits

I don't know, a whole two columns printed and I still haven't received a single piece of fan mail. Since the editor seems determined to blue pen all my attempts to introduce myself, I suppose I'll have to be content with being a man of mystery. (*The main mystery is how you got this job –Ed.*)

WILL THE REAL LICENCE HOLDER . . .

Licensed figures are a big part of our hobby, and it comes as no surprise that the occasional dispute arises between rival companies. The latest is between *Ral Partha* and *Grenadier Models*; both companies believing that *they* have the licence for *Bushido* figures. Your intrepid *Dwarf* reporter, ever keen to expose the truth, was on the phone to Doug Cowie (*Grenadier Models UK*) pdq.

Some time ago, Scott Bizar of *FGU* (the producers of *Bushido*) suggested that *Grenadier* should do *Bushido* figures in the UK. Later he found out that Bob Charette, one of the game's co-designers, had the right to veto licensed items. Bob has since designed *Ral Partha's Bushido* figures, and has naturally complained about the existence of the *Grenadier* figures.

At the moment the situation is still unresolved, although *Grenadier* will be speaking to *Ral Partha* in order to come to some sort of agreement. The likely outcome – unless an amicable agreement is reached – is the cessation of production of the figures. Shame.

Still on the figures front, someone out there is pirating *Essex* and *Citadel* historical figures. *Citadel* would be interested in any information readers have about this unwelcome practice.

WHAT, NO FREEBIES?

Kathy Schofield from *Corgi Books* would like to point out that the *Dragon Warriors* competition (announced in *WD69*) is officially closed, and that no further *DW* books will be issued to entrants. There were only 250 books available in the first place, a fact apparently overlooked by the writer of the copy.

TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN

The latest addition to the massed ranks of *Games Workshop* underlings in Nottingham is Paul Cockburn, ex-editor of *Imagine*, and, more recently, *Games Master Publications*. He has joined the games production side with the title of Commissioning Editor. If you're not sure what this means, Paul explains: 'I don't know what I'm doing, but the money's good.' Well, I can believe the first. . . .

As well as being a Big Name Fan, author of *Golden Heroes* scenarios, and guest of honour at *Koancon*, Pete Tamlyn works for a computer software house called *RamJam Corporation*. They produce computer adventures, and are looking for scenario writers. A knowledge of computer adventures would be useful, but no programming experience is needed – merely the ability to write, plus, of course, imagination. If you like the idea of earning a few bob, write to Pete at 2 Poplar Road, The Coppice, Aylesbury, Bucks.

Koancon, the fan-run convention, has now been confirmed for Friday August 22nd to Sunday 24th at Warwick University, Coventry. Fees are £10 non-residential, £30 residential (cheques payable to *Koancon*). Write for more details to: Alex Zbyslaw, 123 Hollis Road, Stoke, Coventry CV3 1AG.

SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED

If you've seen the (surprisingly good) film *Desperately Seeking Susan*, you may possibly remember a brief reference to *Dr Ruth's Guide to Good Sex*. Well, I'm sure you'll be delighted to hear that *Victory Games* are bringing out the game of the book. It's for two to four couples, the players moving round the board visiting sex clinics and answering questions about each other's sexual habits. This has the makings of a cult game at conventions, and provides numerous opportunities for role-playing – players could pretend to be well-known hobby personalities! Any thoughts about the staff of *White Dwarf*? Answers on a postcard. . . (*DON'T YOU DARE! –Ed.*)

HONESTLY . . .

Out soon from *Citadel* is the *Citadel Journal*, their regularish magazine featuring articles on gaming, collecting, painting, some of the stranger aspects of *Citadel Miniatures*, as well as including a catalogue section. The latest edition includes a *Warhammer* scenario (a follow-up to the recently-released *Terror of the Lichemaster*), and an in-depth article on Chaos Ratmen. (*Beats Chaos Fruitbats. . . . –Ed.*) The totally unbiased summary of the product? '. . . an absolute must.'

Issue 3 of the quarterly *Traveller's Digest* is now out, priced at $3.95 in the States. It contains a complete adventure involving a race known as 'The Ancients'. Other articles cover Vargr languages and culture, Robo Design Revisited, and Traveller Tech Bits.

Fantasy gaming seems to be doing well in France. *Games Workshop* have appointed Stewart Parkinson to take charge of *GW (Paris)*, whilst a translation of the best-selling *Talisman* is well under way. Meanwhile, the French gaming magazine, *Casus Belli* is expanding into newsagent sales with a print run to rival ours – a brave move indeed.

SURPRISE, SURPRISE!

Jeremy Nuttall has recently announced the results of the fanzine awards run through his own zine, *Demons Drawl*. Much to Jeremy's feigned surprise, the results showed *DD* winning most of the categories and being a runner-up in many of the rest. The problem is that *DD's* results in the poll have nothing whatsoever to do with the quality of the zine. The organisation was such that, understandably, zines voted for by lots of people did best. Since the poll was run through and heavily plugged in *DD*, and since Jeremy's subscribers obviously like the zine (or they wouldn't buy it), the results were almost a foregone conclusion.

DD is actually a good hardware zine, and deserved to do well in some categories. However, the fact that the poll was run through its pages makes the 'achievement' worthless. No one's suggesting for a moment that Jeremy rigged the votes or it any way behaved improperly – he didn't need to. It's just that the poll was inherently biased towards *DD*. Other believers in polls should take note. There may well be a place for fanzine awards such as these, but they must not be run by an editor or they will be nothing more than a farce.

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

Next issue of *White Dwarf* is a must for any thief character. Jon Smithers lectures apprentice thieves in *How To Make Crime Pay*, and Olivier Legrand details the running of a Thieves' Guild in *Banditry Inc.* Stealth and an enquiring mind will help solve the problems posed by *Castle in the Wind* – an *AD&D* adventure with an eastern setting.

You're Booked!, *White Dwarf's* first article for *Judge Dredd – The Role-Playing Game*, covers an unusual aspect of the Justice Department. If you're contemplating running a *Golden Heroes* campaign, then Pete Tamlyn's *Caped Crusades* will provide some useful pointers. Finally, tragedy strikes in *Glen Woe*, a special *Warhammer* scenario from Richard Halliwell, author of *McDeath*. □

FROM THE MAW OF OBLIVION...

ZOMBIE DRAGON DESCRIBED FOR WARHAMMER
by Rick Priestley

Earth-grip could not hold it, nor the pall of death hope to cover its rotting carcass. It is the Zombie Dragon, heaving innards spilling in its wake, falling scale scarse hiding pale shards of bone. The grim stench of decay surrounds it like a laughing army of torment, and its gaze alone can entrap the immortal soul. Tattered wings beat silently upon the ether that the Zombie Dragon may fly beyond the stuff of reality and into your worst nightmare.

ZOMBIE DRAGON

The Zombie Dragon is a magical creature, a dragon given undead form by powerful spells. To create such a terrible being a magician must seek out a dragon that has grown greedy and malicious sitting for untold ages upon a pile of ancient gold. Only such a dragon is suitable to take on undead form for its heart has already become twisted and embittered and turned away from life. A necromancer of sufficient power may then transmute the creature into one of the undead by use of the spell detailed below. Zombie Dragons lack wills of their own, they are mere puppets of destruction, deathly tools of their magical masters. Their greatest power is that of ethereal flight, which allows the creature to fly through all manner of solid objects, such as castle walls or houses, and alight in solid form within the very stronghold of their foes. Their huge rotting limbs can claw and rend, whilst their snapping jaws deal death with lightning speed. Their very presence creates an aura of dismay in living creatures, and their eyes are fearsome weapons of soul-draining potency.

Physique. The Zombie Dragon comprises the physical remains of a dragon. As with living creatures, their size and appearance will vary a great deal depending upon age and type.

Alignment. Non-aligned - can be regarded as evil.

Base size. 40 x 100mm - but any size is acceptable.

Special rules

1. Zombie Dragons are immune to psychological tests, cannot be routed, and never take rout tests.

2. Zombie Dragons cause *fear* in living creatures and *terror* in living creatures under 12' tall.

3. Zombie Dragons are invunerable to normal weapons. They can be harmed only by a magical attack, such as a magical weapon or creature.

4. All of a Zombie Dragon's attacks count as magical, as if from a magical weapon.

5. Zombie Dragons can only be controlled by their magical creator. The range of this control is infinite. If the controller is destroyed then so is the dragon.

6. All living creatures within 4" of the dragon suffer a –1 to hit penalty for shooting or combat due to the depressing effects of the aura of dismay.

7. The Zombie Dragon can fly ethereally. This works like an instant teleport allowing the dragon to move to a new position anywhere on the tabletop, at any height band or on the ground. The dragon cannot fly and move during the same turn, but can fly directly into combat, counting as a charge.

8. The gaze of the Zombie dragon can be used as a shooting or combat attack (but only once per turn). It has a range of 12". Any single target can be transfixed, and must then roll less than its *will power* on 2D6 to escape the gaze. If the roll is failed then 1 automatic wound is caused, and all of the victim's personal characteristics reduced by 1 permanently.

Profile

Fighting Characteristics								Personal Characteristics			
M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Int	Cl	WP
6	6	3 (gaze)	8	8	12	3	6	10	7	10	10

Basic points. 756 - made up to a round 1000 to take into account the additional special abilities and ethereal movement.

ZOMBIE DRAGON SPELL

Spell level 4

Energy 12

Description This spell allows a necromancer to turn a dragon into a Zombie Dragon under his control. In order to be effective, the spell must be cast against a dragon already corrupted by greed, avarice or jealousy. Guardians of treasure are of this kind. Any Chaotic or Evil dragons will also be susceptible. Goodly or neutral dragons cannot be effected.

NEW BOX SET - CITADEL'S ZOMBIE DRAGON

The Zombie Dragon is the latest in a series of models from ace American designer Tom Meier. Tom's other Dragon models can be found in Citadel's Compendium together with the rest of the Citadel range. Modelling is well up to the high standards we have all come to expect from this sculptor, with lots of careful detail to reward the skilled painter. Exposed teeth and bits of innard poking through the flesh are especially well done - the hanging windpipe is a nice touch too! The model makes up to over 160mm long and comes in three sections. Assembly is straight forward enough for anyone used to multi-part castings. The fit of the parts is moderately good and they are cleanly cast. Pieces can be fastened with epoxy glue, holding until dry with plastiscene or similar. A little filling with epoxy putty will help strengthen joints and cover joins. Experienced modellers may wish to pin the wings into place with a length of wire, as well as glueing, as this will strengthen them considerably. A pin-vice can be used to drill a suitable hole through the wing section and body so that a piece of wire can be inserted.

Overall another fine piece from Tom, with the added bonus of coming in a box with full-colour artwork by the incomparable John Blanche.

NOT FOR SALE IN U.S.A.

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WARHAMMER

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